United Nations A/72/PV.14

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 September 2017, 6.25 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.25 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Georgia.

Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Kvirikashvili (Georgia): At the outset, let me express my deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims of the natural disasters that have affected North America over the past several days, including the hurricanes that have devastated Caribbean island nations and parts of the United States and the earthquakes that have impacted Mexico. We convey our solidarity to the Governments and the peoples of those nations during these difficult times. No country, including Georgia, is immune from natural disasters. Solidarity is what strengthens nations when addressing such severe challenges.

My fellow countrymen share with me the honour of addressing the General Assembly today, because the message that I have been entrusted to deliver is one that they understand in their bones, having personally experienced it, lived it and embraced it. That message — their message — is straightforward: by putting Georgian citizens at the centre of our strategy, we aim to further strengthen democratic institutions, ensure peace and accelerate economic growth. Those are the essential multipliers for sustainable development, a project that connects us with the region and the world.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of Georgia's membership in the United Nations. During that period, we have managed to transform our country from a recipient of United Nations humanitarian aid to a top reformer that was recently elected as Chair of the Open Government Partnership. Georgia brings to that task the same vision that it espouses for itself: putting its citizens at the centre of its priorities. Georgia's chairship of the Open Government Partnership will support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 16, on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

In implementing the SDGs by incorporating them into our national policies, we have seen the need for the institutional reform of the United Nations, and we support the new vision of Secretary-General Guterres as reflected in the Declaration of Support, to which we recently subscribed. When I spoke before the Assembly last year (see A/71/PV.13), Georgia was heading into

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-29597 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

general elections. That resulted in our people entrusting us with increased support to lead the country. The people saw two things. First, they saw that we are committed to making democratic rights and security the key drivers of all our policies. Secondly, they saw that we offer a clear path for further reforms.

Our citizens feel the changes that international institutions have been clearly referring to. Georgia has advanced in all international rankings over the past five years. The Fraser Institute ranks the Georgian economy as the fifth freest in the world. We have come to grips with corruption. The Heritage Foundation ranked Georgia thirty-first in terms of freedom from corruption in 2017, an improvement from its ranking of sixty-ninth in 2012. Transparency International echoed that progress in 2016 by ranking Georgia first in the region in that regard. We have prioritized the protection of property rights. The World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017* has raised Georgia's ranking by 77 since 2012. We are committed to an independent judiciary. The World Economic Forum ranks Georgia at sixty-third in that regard, an increase in rankings of 28. In the critical area of law enforcement and physical security, the World Bank ranks Georgia twenty-sixth with respect to combating organized crime, an increase in rankings of 41.

We are not making merely cosmetic changes. We promised our people that we would introduce a parliamentary system and improve our Constitution so as to conform to the best European standards. In addition to addressing numerous contradictions in the current Constitution, the new draft introduces many new progressive initiatives, such as the right to physical integrity, the rights of persons with disabilities, the right to access to the Internet, environmental protections and many more that are in line with the recommendations of the European Commission for Democracy through Law, also know as the Venice Commission. Those commitments reflect Georgians' aspirations to attain full membership in the European Union and NATO. Georgians understand that to be their destiny, as Georgia has long been an integral part of Europe's broad cultural and historical tapestry.

In parallel with constitutional reform, we began implementing our four-point economic reform plan aimed at ensuring quick economic growth. We launched an ambitious education reform in order to facilitate links between the educational system and industry and develop demand-based higher and professional education and enhance the economic skills and capacity of the labour force.

Living in an innovative society is a key to success for our talented young people. We are further investing in our national ecosystem and in integrating it into the global one so as to open doors and build bridges connecting our innovators with world markets.

Prudent macroeconomic policy has been the foundation of our success in the region's turbulent economic environment. The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report has advanced Georgia by 97 places in the rankings since 2012. This month, Moody's upgraded the sovereign credit rating of Georgia to Ba2, acknowledging that Georgia has successfully overcome the regional shock of 2014-2016.

In order to increase incentives to invest in Georgia, we have implemented a bold taxation reform, which includes abolishing the profit tax on undistributed earnings and liberalizing the tax administration system. We anticipate up to 5 per cent economic growth this year, rising to 7 per cent and higher in the coming years.

We are committed to upgrading Georgia's infrastructure. That is important in order for Georgia to realize its geostrategic aim of serving as a hub for doing business in the region, connecting East and West. Upgrading our infrastructure is essential so as to ensure the rapid delivery of services, achieve efficiency in tourism and logistics, and effectively take goods to market. We see that as a powerful way to create employment that pulls people out of poverty. We have agreed to a multi-year programme with the International Monetary Fund and have secured financing for projects worth several billion dollars from international financial organizations.

Georgia, like Ukraine and Moldova, has signed an Association Agreement with a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreement with the European Union (EU) and has secured visa-free travel to the EU. At the same time, Georgia has become the first country in the region to sign a free-trade agreement with China. On the one hand, we are integrating into the EU internal market and, on the other hand, we are bringing Asian markets closer to us. That enables Georgia to use the full potential of its free trade networks as part of one of the most exciting development ventures of our time.

We are contributing to the One Belt, One Road project, which will facilitate trade in high-value

goods and services between Europe and Asia, cutting significant time from the length of traditional seaborne transport around the peripheries of Eurasia. Asia and Europe will meet in that grand adventure through the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, which we are implementing together with our Turkish and Azeri partners, and Georgia's new state-of-the-art port on the Black Sea at Anaklia. That deep-water port will be capable of handling the largest container ships, which will result in a multifold increase of Georgia's cargo-transit capacity. Anaklia will be developed by multiple international players and will be operated by a well-known American company.

Georgia is now less than 10 days from East Asia and within five days of any point in Europe. We are creating an efficient multimodal transit infrastructure that will forge links and processes, and will cement relationships among States and people from Europe to Asia. It represents the fundamental connection between building economic stability for Georgian citizens and achieving a more prosperous and peaceful region.

In a world full of challenges — hot and frozen conflicts, State and non-State aggressions — Georgia is no exception. And here, too, we have put our citizens at the centre of our strategy. United Nations Members are well aware that the Russian Federation continues to occupy two historical regions of Georgia's sovereign territory in violation of its many international obligations, including dozens of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Since the beginning of 2017, the Russian Federation has intensified its policy of occupation and factual annexation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia. It has implemented so-called integration treaties and signed so-called agreements with de facto authorities to absorb Georgia's occupied regions into Russia's military, political, economic and social systems. It has also accelerated its military build-up in both of the occupied regions of Georgia. The Russian Federation has intensified the fortification of the occupation lines by installing razor-wire fences, trenches, so-called border signs and other artificial barriers. Families have even endured having razor-wire fences cut through their dwellings and farmyards. Vulnerable groups, such as people in need of medical care and schoolchildren crossing to get an education in their native language, which is prohibited in the occupied regions, have been blocked by closed crossing points. Meanwhile, Russia continues to install motion detectors and other technologies in order to assert full control of all crossings along the occupation line.

Georgia is firmly committed to the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict. The Georgian Government complies with the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement. It has many times reaffirmed its adherence to the legally binding non-use of force. Russia has not reciprocated. Georgia's consistent efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict are reflected in the testimonies of many countries and international organizations. I would like to thank world leaders for addressing the need of accelerating peaceful conflict resolution and for supporting Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty during this general debate.

Every year, the General Assembly adopts a resolution reiterating the right of return of all internally displaced persons and refugees to the occupied regions. Georgians are grateful for the support of the United Nations, but the resolutions have not translated into reality for hundreds of thousands of my compatriots waiting to return to their homes, simply because one State Member of the United Nations refuses to comply with its international obligations.

The Government of Georgia is providing new instruments to rebuild trust with our compatriots living across the occupation line. We are determined to make the benefits of Georgia's European agenda available to the people on the other side of occupation line. Our substantial package of initiatives for those under occupation include providing opportunities for trans-administrative borderline trade and access to Georgia's free trade opportunities in the global marketplace. We also offer them health care, education and other social benefits.

Despite the challenges we face, Georgia is a significant contributor to Euro-Atlantic security. Our strategic partnership with the United States has proved to be key for our development and stability, and we are committed to deepening those ties further. The EU Global Strategy has recognized Georgia's success as a prosperous, peaceful and stable democracy and as a significant contributor in its neighbourhood.

We continue our active participation in international operations, including in Afghanistan and in the European crisis-management operations in the Central African Republic and Mali. In 2014, Georgia became a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and joined three

counter-ISIS working groups on counter-financing, on counter-messaging and on foreign terrorist fighters. Georgia is a party to 14 United Nations counter-terrorism conventions and to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, and fulfils its commitments in that regard.

Georgia is growing. Georgia is vibrant. Georgia is resilient in the face of challenges. Georgia carries its share of international responsibilities. Georgia is all of those things, because Georgia is its citizens. They are at the centre of our Government's strategy, and that is where they will remain. As we have reached out to the world, the world has come to us. Our citizens are the beneficiaries of greater connectivity to the world. Their economic success is a prerequisite for sustained well-being and prosperity, both at home and well beyond Georgia's borders. I speak today as one steward of our nation, with thanks to all who love and support Georgia.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Browne (Antigua and Barbuda): On 6 September, my small, two-island State, Antigua and Barbuda, was the victim of the ferocity of Hurricane Irma, the largest storm endured in the Atlantic in human history. The island of Barbuda was decimated, its entire population left homeless and its buildings reduced to empty shells.

Fortunately, Antigua and Barbuda was spared the full blast of Hurricane Maria just nine days later, although sustained winds of up to 60 miles per hour gave us a troubling awareness of the agony visited on the nearby islands of Dominica, Guadeloupe and Puerto Rico. Antigua and Barbuda continued to stay resilient. Having witnessed the devastation of Barbuda and the desolation of its inhabitants after the ravages of Irma, my heart bleeds for the people of the countries that have now been brutalized by Maria, and those that will suffer its cruelty in the coming days.

I have come to the General Assembly because I consider it to be important to speak to the world's representatives and to do so collectively in order to share the experience of my country, as well as the huge challenges faced by the Caribbean islands in general. Barbuda and its inhabitants were among the worst affected by Hurricane Irma in the region. Barbuda has a surface of 62 square miles. When Irma thundered over the island, it was 375 miles wide, with gale force winds of 220 miles per hour. Barbuda did not stand the faintest chance against such size, such ferocity and such intensity. The island was completely destroyed, and my Government was compelled to evacuate all of the inhabitants to Antigua.

For the first time in over 300 years, there are now no permanent residents on Barbuda. The footprints of an entire civilization have been erased by the brutality and magnitude of Irma. Everything that meant anything to the inhabitants had to be left behind — their homes, their possessions, their history, indeed, everything that defines them as a society and as a people. Mercifully, Antigua, the larger of the two islands, suffered no major damage, and it could begin to function normally within 48 hours.

Had that not been the case, how we would have coped is simply beyond imagination. Overnight, Antigua's population increased by almost 3 per cent. I know of no country that could easily cope with such an unplanned, unexpected and unscheduled increase in its population.

In addition to providing shelter, accommodation and basic necessities to the evacuated residents of Barbuda, the social services on Antigua are now under great strain. They struggle to provide school places for an additional 600 students, medical services for the elderly and a means of earning an income for the able-bodied. Naturally, the residents of Barbuda are anxious to return to their homeland. But, as I speak to the Assembly, the island remains unfit for human habitation. There is no electricity or potable water, and

95 per cent of the buildings have been destroyed or severely damaged.

Preliminary estimates have placed the cost of rebuilding Barbuda at about $250 million. That figure represents 15 per cent or more of my country's gross domestic product of approximately $1.5 billion. It is simply a stretch beyond our reach.

The President took the Chair.

Antigua and Barbuda urgently requires the assistance of the international community, including the international development and finance institutions, to accomplish the vital task of rebuilding Barbuda. And I should say that we have not outstretched the palm of our hand because we simply crave; we plead because we need.

Barbuda is not only a natural disaster; it is a humanitarian crisis that now consumes Antigua. Even as my Government and people look forward to the assistance of the better-off nations of the world, I thank those nations and persons who were first responders, particularly the Government and the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who went beyond the call of duty to assist. I also acknowledge the commitment of and contributions from the Government and the people of the People's Republic of China, the Governments of Cuba, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Canada, the Dominican Republic and sister States of the Caribbean Community, who gave generously from the little they have. That includes Dominica, which, in one wretched night, lost a significant number of precious lives and years of hard-earned development under the unrelenting battering of Hurricane Maria.

On Antigua, Barbudans are being cared for as best we can with our very limited resources. But as the period of care lengthens, not only do the conditions worsen but the cost also increases, forcing my Government to borrow money on commercial terms at high interest rates and swelling our already burdensome national debt.

The present international financial architecture is leaving small States such as mine behind. Whatever position on climate change a nation may take, the evidence of global warming is now irrefutably stronger. Two Category 5 hurricanes within 12 days, which unrelentingly pounded so many countries, can no longer be dismissed as vagaries of the weather, nor can they be explained as Nature's doing. Hurricanes are stronger and bigger because they are absorbing moisture from seas that are increasingly warmer as a result of global warming.

And that is a man-made phenomenon, attributable to those nations that consume 80 per cent or more of the world's primary energy, emitting dangerous levels of pollution into the atmosphere. All 14 Caribbean Community countries together produce less than 0.1 per cent of global emissions. We are the least of the polluters but the largest of the casualties. The unfairness, injustice and inequality of the situation are painfully obvious.

If such frequent and brutal storms are to be withstood, Caribbean islands and certain parts of the United States need to construct more resilient buildings and infrastructure than now exists. That means that the international development and financial institutions need to provide financing at concessionary rates without artificial impediments. If that does not happen, the subsequent cost in lives and property is too frightening to contemplate.

Increasingly, States such as mine are victims of an international economic and financial system that regards us merely as a numerical statistic or a mere nuisance. We are measured by the level of our income, even though it is an insufficient and unreasonable criterion for establishing vulnerability, poverty and need. Like many other small island States, my developing country is categorized as high-income, thus denying it access to concessional financing and grant funding from international financial institutions and donor Governments.

It is patently obvious that the per-capita income criterion is a skewed and flawed determinant. It should be eliminated and eliminated immediately. Because we are small economies with inadequate domestic capital formation, our countries open our doors to foreign investment, granting significant tax concessions so as to attract investments and help provide jobs to curb poverty. The consequence is that a small percentage of persons in our community, mostly expatriates, at the top end of businesses earn the largest percentage of high incomes and the mass of the population earns considerably less. In addition, Government tax revenues are significantly reduced owing to the investment concessions granted. It is time that those who control the levers of power in the economic and financial international community acknowledged that

the per-capita system of measurement is discriminatory and resolved to change it. It is time that that particular swamp be drained, and now is the time for action.

In the United States, where the United Nations is located and the Assembly is gathered today, one of its early leaders, Abraham Lincoln, declared at a critical time in its history that this country could not survive "half slave and half free". He may have been speaking specifically of America and of the disunity that gripped it at the time, but he was talking about more than immorality. He was also talking about social and economic justice. Lincoln's observation is compellingly relevant to social and economic justice in the world today. Injustice and inequality breed instability. The world cannot survive with the wealthy few controlling 90 per cent of global resources. If so, its centre will not hold. Its centre will not hold if the inequality between rich and poor nations increases. It will not be stable until social and economic justice prevails.

My country and citizens do not want to beg for a living. We want to work for it. We want to earn our way, but we cannot do so if the international system refuses to provide us with the means and the tools to build our future. Access to concessional financing represents an imperative need that would give us a great leap forward. It would take us out of the spiral of debt that we are incurring owing to our repeated need to rebuild after disasters with high-cost commercial money. Where is the justice in that? In large wealthy countries borrowing occurs in capital markets at 3 per cent per annum while the so-called high-income small island States are forced to borrow commercially at 12 per cent per annum to repeatedly rebuild infrastructure damaged by hurricanes. Where is the justice in that? It is irrational and punitive to graduate a small island State that cannot pay its debts to high-income status, thereby precluding it from much-needed development financing.

The theme of the Assembly's general debate is "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". That is all my people and the people of small island States want — peace and a decent life on a planet that is sustainable. We deserve nothing less, and we expect nothing less. It is in that connection that I draw attention to the fact that even in the midst of our present crisis, Antigua and Barbuda is faced with demands from a Paris Club group of wealthy countries for the settlement of $130 million in debts incurred four decades ago because concessional financing was and is still denied to us. It would be of enormous help in dealing with the plight that we now face and the daunting task of rebuilding Barbuda at a cost upwards of $250 million if those wealthy Paris Club countries would forgive or at least reduce significantly the debt that now weighs so heavily on our shoulders. It should be noted that the amount outstanding constitutes primarily accrued interest. Such a step would provide us with the fiscal space to borrow as we seek to garner every cent to recover and rebuild from Hurricane Irma and to give our people a chance to achieve a decent life in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals.

In that same context, my small country won a trade dispute with the United States in 2004 before the World Trade Organization. That trade violation led to significant revenue losses to my country and to greater unemployment among my people. It has been 13 long years since that judgement and seven years since the final appeal by the United States resulted in a final ruling in my country's favour, and yet the United States has failed to settle. The loss of trade revenues to my small country has risen to more than $200 million. Our Government has laboured unsuccessfully for more than 13 years to reach an amicable and reasonable settlement with the United States. That is a classic case where might is right and where the rights of a small, powerless State have been trampled on.

I should mention that over the past 13 years the United States has enjoyed a trade surplus with my small country of more than $2 billion — I repeat, $2 billion. I am well aware that the prolongation of a settlement of the judgement in question is not the making of the present United States Administration, which inherited it. But in the interest of fairness, justice and good conscience, it would be beneficial to my nation in this hour of great need for the United States Government to settle that case.

In this very Hall two days ago, President Trump said of the United States,

> "[W]e can no longer be taken advantage of or enter into a one-sided deal where the United States gets nothing in return" (*A/72/PV.3, p. 11*).

His observation, which I welcome, is equally true for the relationship with Antigua and Barbuda. Honouring its obligations to Antigua and Barbuda is not a one-sided deal in which the United States gets nothing in return, because ultimately 90 per cent of the settlement proceeds will be spent in the United States economy, as our primary source market. The United States is the

greatest beneficiary of trade with my country and has been so year after year for many decades. Settling with us for more than 13 years of trade losses would take less than one year of the trade surplus that the United States' $20 trillion economy has with Antigua and Barbuda's mere $1 billion economy.

In the past few days the experience of the Caribbean islands has shown that entire ancient communities can be snuffed out overnight and the quality of their life suddenly and irreversibly set back. I remind members that for the first time in more than 300 years there is no permanent human resident on Barbuda. But my Government is determined to rebuild Barbuda, however long it takes and with whatever resources we can muster. We are determined that no Caribbean society will be extinguished and that the Caribbean nations will remain firmly on the global map. But even as we resolve, with limited means, to keep our societies alive and vibrant, we call on the international community to acknowledge its obligation to humankind and all peoples, without whom its own societies cannot prosper and will not thrive. In the words of the poet John Donne,

> "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee".

As citizens of planet Earth, let us acknowledge our common humanity and work in harmony to make our world a better place.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Abbasi (Pakistan): I would first like to convey the deepest sympathies of the people and the Government of Pakistan to the people of Mexico, who have been affected by the recent earthquake, and all of those affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Let me then congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I am confident that your long experience in public service and international relations will be an asset in successfully guiding the Assembly to address the imposing challenge of security, development and governance that confront the world today.

For over 70 years, despite the Cold War, the nuclear arms race and scores of regional conflicts, our world has been able to avoid a global conflagration. That can be ascribed largely to the adherence by most States to the prohibition of the use or threat of use of force, except under the authority of the Charter of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations have been progressively eroded in the new millennium. In recent years, some countries have displayed a growing proclivity to resort to unilateral force and intervention against other States. Coercion and threats have emerged once again as the main currency in the management of inter-State disputes and differences. Renewed East-West tensions may engulf Europe in another Cold War. Peace and prosperity in Asia are threatened by emerging great Power friction and rising tensions in South, East and West Asia.

The Middle East is racked by war and violence in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere. Although Da'esh appears to have been weakened in Iraq and Syria, terrorist violence has spread and intensified across the Middle East and Africa and other parts of the world. There is no end in sight to the tragedy of Palestine. Israel's prolonged occupation and the expansion of illegal settlements may lead to renewed and wider violence in the holy land.

The legitimate struggle for self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir continues to be brutally suppressed by India's occupation forces. Rising racism and religious hatred, manifested in xenophobia and Islamophobia, is erecting physical walls and psychological barriers among nations and peoples, even as our world becomes increasingly interdependent.

The ethnic cleansing of the Rohingyas is not just an affront to all norms of humanity but also challenges our collective conscience.

While the pillars of world order are being eroded, the imperative of international cooperation — the need to address poverty, disease, climate change, nuclear proliferation, terrorism and forced displacement — is intensifying. Today, more than ever, we need the United Nations to provide the parameters, processes and platforms for global cooperation, which is essential if we are to address the wide-ranging challenges to peace, security and development.

Pakistan welcomes the efforts launched by Secretary-General António Guterres to revitalize the United Nations capabilities in peace and security, development and management. We are also committed to a reform that transforms the Security Council into a more representative, democratic and accountable organ, rather than an expanded club of the powerful and the privileged.

Pakistan celebrated the seventieth anniversary of its independence last month. This month marks the seventieth anniversary of Pakistan's membership in the United Nations. Pakistan's commitment to the principles of the United Nations is evident from the long record of its constructive role in the initiatives and contributions that have shaped the decisions and discourse at the world Organization with regard to decolonization, development, trade, international law, human rights, refugees, peacekeeping, security, disarmament and United Nations budget and management.

Pakistan has consistently been one of the world's top troop contributors to United Nations peacekeeping. We will remain on the front lines of peacekeeping and continue to offer professional and well-trained personnel to the United Nations, despite our own security challenges.

Our adherence to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations flows from the declaration of our founding father, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who said that our foreign policy was one of friendliness and goodwill towards all nations of the world.

Unfortunately, from day one of its creation, Pakistan has faced unremitting hostility from its eastern neighbour. India refuses to implement the unanimous resolutions of the Security Council, which mandate a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to enable the people of Jammu and Kashmir to freely decide their destiny. Instead, India has deployed nearly 700,000 troops in occupied Kashmir to suppress the legitimate struggle of the Kashmiris to exercise their right to self-determination. That represents the most intense foreign military occupation in recent history. As in the past, the Kashmiri people today are waging a heroic and popular struggle to rid themselves of India's oppressive rule. They come out in the streets daily to call on India to leave Jammu and Kashmir.

India has responded with massive and indiscriminate force to suppress the Kashmiris, shooting indiscriminately at children, women and youth. Hundreds of innocent Kashmiris have been killed or injured, and shotgun pellets have blinded and maimed thousands of Kashmiris, including children. Those and other brutalities clearly constitute war crimes and violate the Geneva Conventions.

Pakistan demands that an international investigation be conducted into India's crimes in occupied Kashmir. We ask that the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights send an inquiry commission to occupied Kashmir to verify the nature and extent of India's human rights violations, secure the punishment of those responsible and provide justice and relief to the victims.

Pakistan also urges the international community to call on India to halt pellet-gun attacks and other violence against unarmed demonstrators, stop the use of rape as an instrument of State policy, end media blackouts, rescind its draconian emergency laws and free all Kashmiri political leaders. To divert the world's attention from its brutalities, India frequently violates the ceasefire along the Line of Control in Kashmir. Despite more than 600 violations since January, Pakistan has acted with restraint, but if India ventures across the Line of Control, or acts upon its doctrine of limited war against Pakistan, it will elicit a strong and matching response. The international community must act decisively to prevent the situation from turning into a dangerous escalation.

The Kashmir dispute should be resolved justly, peacefully and expeditiously. As India is unwilling to resume the peace process with Pakistan, we call on the Security Council to fulfil its obligation to secure the implementation of its resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir. To that end, the Secretary-General should appoint a Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir.

His mandate should flow from the long-standing but unimplemented relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Let me reiterate that Pakistan remains open to resuming a comprehensive dialogue with India aimed at addressing all outstanding issues, especially Jammu and Kashmir, and discussing measures to maintain peace and security. That dialogue must be accompanied by an end to India's campaign of subversion and State-sponsored terrorism against Pakistan, including from across our western border.

Apart from the people of Afghanistan, Pakistan and its people have suffered the most from four decades of foreign intervention and civil wars in Afghanistan. Those wars have blighted our country with the flow of extremists and terrorists, guns and drugs, as well as an influx of millions of refugees. They have set back our economic development by decades. Even today, Pakistan is host to more than 3 million Afghan refugees. No one desires peace in Afghanistan more than Pakistan. From the 16 years of ongoing war in Afghanistan, it is clear that peace will not be restored by resorting continuously to military force. Kabul, the Coalition and the Afghan Taliban cannot impose a military solution on one another. The international community — as expressed in several United Nations resolutions — has concluded that peace can be restored in Afghanistan only through a negotiated settlement.

Having suffered and sacrificed so much owing to its role in the global counter-terrorism campaign, Pakistan finds it especially galling to be blamed for the military or political stalemate in Afghanistan. We are not prepared to be anyone's scapegoat. Taliban safe havens are located not in Pakistan but in the large tracts of territory controlled by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Yes, cross-border attacks do occur. They are mostly conducted by anti-Pakistan terrorists from safe havens across the border. In order to end all cross-border attacks, we ask the Afghan Government and the Coalition to support and complement Pakistan's ongoing efforts to strengthen border controls and monitor all movement across it.

What Pakistan is not prepared to do is to fight the Afghan war on Pakistan's soil, nor can we endorse any failed strategy that will prolong and intensify the suffering of the people of Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries of the region. Pakistan believes that the urgent and realistic goals in Afghanistan should be: first, to make a concerted effort to eliminate the presence in Afghanistan of Da'esh, Al-Qaida and their affiliates, including the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, which was recently declared a terrorist organization by the Security Council; and, secondly, to encourage negotiations between Kabul and the Afghan Taliban — within the framework of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group or any other trilateral format — to reach a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan. Those two steps offer the most realistic prospect of restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan and our region.

Pakistan's counter-terrorism credentials cannot be questioned. Following the 9/11 attack on the United States in 2001, it was Pakistani efforts that enabled the decimation of Al-Qaida. Pakistan's military campaigns have succeeded in clearing our tribal areas of almost all militant groups. We took the war to the terrorists. We have paid a heavy price. More than 27,000 Pakistanis, including 6,500 military and law-enforcement personnel, have been martyred by terrorists. Some 50,000 Pakistani nationals have been injured, including 15,000 army personnel, many of whom have lost limbs.

We have fought the war against terror with our own resources. Pakistan's economic losses are estimated at more than $120 billion. Yet we remain fully committed to implementing our national action plan against terrorism and extremism. Defeating terrorist violence is vital to realizing our overriding priority of rapid economic and social development.

Terrorism is now a global phenomenon that must be addressed comprehensively. We see two major gaps in the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

First, the international community has failed to address the issue of State-sponsored terrorism. That is the instrument of choice of the agents of chaos and aspiring hegemons. In several regions, stability will be difficult to restore unless State-sponsored terrorism is condemned, prohibited and punished.

Secondly, in order to eliminate terrorism, its root causes must be addressed, which go beyond poverty and ignorance. Terrorism is rather an extreme response to real or perceived political and/or other grievances, including foreign intervention, oppression and injustice. Unless such root causes are addressed, it will be difficult to counter the twisted narratives of terrorist groups.

Confronted by a hostile and increasingly militarized neighbour, Pakistan has been obliged to maintain its capability for credible deterrence. My country developed nuclear weapons only when they were introduced in our region by that neighbour. Our strategic assets are vital in order to deter the frequent threat of aggression. They are tightly and effectively controlled, as has been widely acknowledged by experts. The world community would be well served by enabling Pakistan to join global non-proliferation arrangements, such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group, on a non-discriminatory basis.

Climate change poses a new and existential threat to humankind's future. Extreme climate events are multiplying. Their consequences, such as the flooding in Texas, the landslides in Nepal and Sierra Leone, the devastation wrought by hurricanes in the Caribbean and Puerto Rico, and the disappearance of the Himalayan glaciers, are global and indiscriminate. As one of the States most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, Pakistan believes that it is in our collective interest to pursue and realize the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and build a new and greener model for growth and development.

Growth and development remain the primary goals of developing countries. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals represent the most ambitious development agenda in history. The development challenge has become even more difficult owing to the combined constraints of climate change, increasing protectionism, the deterioration of international cooperation and the proliferation of conflicts. The vision of shared growth spelled out in Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative offers a solid path to prosperity and a model of South-South cooperation worthy of emulation.

Pakistan's economy has recorded a remarkable revival over the past four years. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will further contribute to our economic upsurge. That will expand exponentially as the Pakistan-China partnership extends beyond energy and transportation to many other sectors. Pakistan's integration into the Eurasian Belt and Road Initiative will provide a firm foundation for Pakistan's rapid economic development. With a youthful population of 207 million people, we are confident that an economic strategy anchored in rising incomes, consumption and production will propel Pakistan towards greater prosperity. To achieve those priority goals for our people, Pakistan seeks to build peace within our country and security around our borders. We seek good relations with all States on the basis of sovereign equality. We will respond positively to all offers of friendship and cooperation.

We are poised at a critical inflection point in history. The world order that has prevented a global war for more than 70 years is under threat. Yet revolutionary advances in science and technology, the immense capacity for global investment, production, consumption and trade, especially in the developing countries, and the availability of structures and mechanisms for collective action offer an opportunity, unprecedented in human history, to address the diverse challenges that we face today. It is here, through the United Nations, that the peoples of the world can seize the opportunities to achieve our shared vision of a more just, peaceful and prosperous world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcome His Excellency Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of

the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Jugnauth (Mauritius): Let me begin by expressing my deepest sympathy and solidarity with the people and the Government of Mexico following the devastating earthquake that has taken the lives of hundreds of men, women and children.

It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly for the first time as the Prime Minister of Mauritius. I am here today to reaffirm my country's continued commitment to the universal values of the Organization.

I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I assure you of our total support as you steer the work of the Assembly. The six priorities that you have identified under the theme of focusing on people echo our own aspirations as a nation.

We extend our warm congratulations to Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as the new Secretary-General. I commend him for the multidimensional vision he has for the United Nations and for the process that he has initiated on the repositioning of the United Nations development system to effectively and efficiently deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We also welcome the consultative process that he has initiated with Member States in that regard. We fully support his initiative and encourage him to make greater use of modern communication technology and of local capacities in the implementation of United Nations-sponsored projects. We also appreciate his view that the reform we seek is but part of a larger reform of the United Nations system, including the revitalization of the role of the General Assembly.

The last time there was a reform of the Security Council was in 1965. That was more than 50 years ago, and Assembly membership then stood at 117. We now have 193 Member States. The Security Council needs to reflect those changes, and that should be done at the earliest. I believe the time has now come for us to proceed with text-based negotiations to be concluded within an agreed time frame. The African Common Position on this matter, which has so far not been challenged, can with appropriate additions provide a basis for such negotiations. Mauritius fully supports the Ezulwini Consensus and Africa's aspiration for a more pronounced role in the Security Council. For far too long, Africa has been left on the side when it comes to global governance. It is time to correct that gross injustice.

We also fully support India's aspiration to a seat on the Security Council. We equally believe that small island developing States (SIDS) must play a more prominent role in the Security Council and that their call for a dedicated non-permanent seat is legitimate and appropriate.

The maintenance of peace and security requires tremendous and constant effort, negotiation, understanding and compromise. Mauritius voted in favour of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last July, and we hope to see complete denuclearization throughout the world. We urge all those involved in potential conflicts around the world, especially where there is a possibility of nuclear weapons being used, to exercise restraint and promote dialogue instead of belligerent posturing, which only feeds unrest and dangerous escalation.

We urge restraint and dialogue in Myanmar, where violence continues to displace thousands of people and has caused numerous victims. We make an appeal for the unrestricted provision of humanitarian assistance to all those affected. We also call for the early implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State with a view to finding a long-lasting solution.

Despite our best efforts, terrorism continues to claim innocent lives and undermine the sovereignty of States. We condemn terrorism in all its forms, wherever they occur, and we stand in solidarity with the Governments and the peoples that are victims of terrorism. We congratulate the Secretary-General on establishing the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. We expect the new Office to provide leadership, coordination and coherence, to strengthen assistance for capacity-building to Member States, and to improve visibility, advocacy and resource mobilization for United Nations counter-terrorism efforts. We also need to address the root causes of that scourge, and we expect the Office to provide valuable input in that regard.

The situation in the Middle East and the plight of the Palestinian people continue to be issues of great concern. We call on all sides to sincerely start talks for a peaceful solution to the Palestinian issue. Mauritius has always supported a two-State solution, with Palestine and Israel living peacefully side by side.

An independent and viable Palestine is more likely to provide security both to Israel and the region.

Mauritius highly values the importance of its integration within Africa and believes in the universal benefits of the continental integration of Africa. The Agenda 2063 of the African Union, adopted in January 2015, is in consonance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provides a strategy for development that is people-driven and respectful of the rule of law. That vision of Africa will be carried by its people and youth, and Africa is today home to a growing youthful population and experiencing increased urbanization. Along with the digital transformation of the continent, improving infrastructure and connectivity, and its rich wind, hydro and solar capacity, Africa has the potential of becoming a beacon for sustainable development. It is geared to become a driver of economic growth and a huge consumer market.

In July, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development met to review the status of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda two years after its adoption. I would like to congratulate the 44 countries that presented their voluntary national reviews. In Mauritius, a coordinating mechanism has been set up for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are in the process of consultations with the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders, and we expect to submit our voluntary national review at the next High-level Political Forum, in 2018.

Addressing climate change is central and critical to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. With the increasing number and intensity of climate-related disasters, including storms, droughts and flash floods, it would be naïve on our part to dismiss climate change. We have just recently witnessed the devastating violence of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. I would like to express my Government's deep sympathy to and solidarity with the Governments and the peoples of the islands of the Caribbean and the United States for the lives lost in the devastating trails of those hurricanes.

Mitigating the effects of climate change and effectively implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction will require substantial effort and resources, especially for SIDS, if we want to be more resilient in the aftermath of those natural calamities. Although we welcome the generous pledges made thus far, including the establishment of the Green Climate Fund, we need to streamline and simplify the procedures for SIDS to access those funds, especially in the light of recent events.

This year's High-level Political Forum recognized the specific challenges faced by SIDS and middle-income countries. Classification as a middle-income country renders SIDS such as Mauritius ineligible for most official development assistance (ODA) and concessional funding. Middle-income countries are often victims of their success in graduating from the status of least developed country and run the risk of getting stuck in the middle-income trap. Middle-income SIDS such as Mauritius aspire to be partners in development rather than mere recipients of ODA. With the help of the United Nations development system and other partners, as well as the provision of tailor-made programmes, those countries can contribute to the sharing of experience and knowledge with countries aspiring to graduate from LDC status and consolidate their own economic development at the same time.

Oceans are of vital importance to SIDS. Mauritius, with its exclusive economic zone of more than 2.3 million square kilometres, is a large-ocean State. That is why my Government has developed an ocean strategy covering fisheries, tourism and deep-ocean-water applications, as well as resource exploration and exploitation. We call on our partners to assist us in implementing that strategy, as expressed in paragraph 13 (q) of the Call for Action of the United Nations Ocean Conference.

Mauritius is honoured to co-chair the High-level Panel on Water convened by the former Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank. The Panel met today to take stock of the progress achieved following the adoption of its action plan in September 2016, which called for a transformative approach to the management of water resources. The outcome package of the Panel is expected to make concrete proposals for the achievement of the targets of SDG 6, and we hope that all world leaders will support it.

Adherence to international law, safeguarding fundamental human rights and respect for the territorial integrity of countries underpin relations among countries. With regard to Mauritius, all those principles were flouted when an integral part of its territory, namely, the Chagos Archipelago, was excised prior to its independence, in violation of international law, including obligations reflected in resolutions 1514 (XV),

of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX), of 16 December 1965, and all the inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly evicted. Our decolonization remains to be completed five decades following the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

A crucial role of the International Court of Justice is to provide guidance through its advisory opinions to the organs and agencies of our Organization for the fulfilment of their responsibilities. It is in that spirit that States members of the Group of African States proposed a resolution in June seeking an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. We were very pleased that the resolution was adopted, and even more so by the fact that it was by such a resounding majority. That vote demonstrated the great importance that Member States from across the globe — not just in Africa, but also in Europe, Asia and the Americas — attach to the need to complete the process of decolonization, as well as their concern for the injustices caused to the evicted inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago. As a matter of fact, that overwhelming vote has renewed their hope that they might finally return to their place of birth.

The United Nations membership has indeed made it clear that it wishes to see the decolonization process of Mauritius completed, and, to that end, has turned to the International Court of Justice for guidance. We are hopeful that the Court's advisory opinion will not only guide the important work of the General Assembly, but will also allow Mauritius to move forward, including with an appropriate programme in favour of the inhabitants who were displaced from that part of the Mauritian territory. Many members had the opportunity in June to see an exhibition on the tragedy surrounding that eviction and to interact with those who were forced to leave in such inhumane conditions.

We thank Member States for their support and look forward to their continued encouragement as we complete our decolonization. In this regard, we express the hope that as many Member States as possible will contribute to the proceedings in which the Court has invited them to participate.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm that Mauritius has no intention of seeking the disruption of the security arrangements currently in place in Diego Garcia, the largest island of the Chagos archipelago. I would also like to reiterate what successive Mauritian Governments have clearly stated. Mauritius is willing to enter into a long-term renewable lease with the United States to allow these security arrangements to remain in place. In this regard, completing the process of decolonization will enhance security by providing legality and certainty.

With respect to Tromelin, which has always formed and continues to form an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, we welcome the constructive progress made with France, including the agreement reached in 2010.

During this seventy-second session of the General Assembly, we have an opportunity to commit ourselves to agreements and decisions that would considerably improve the lives of ordinary people all around the world. As we prepare to turn this planet over to later generations, I would renew our commitment to striving for a world where peace, security and prosperity do not remain mere distant dreams.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius, for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bangla; English text provided by the delegation*): Mr. President,

let me extend my heartiest felicitations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. My delegation assures you of our full support in discharging your priorities on people, peace and planet.

This is the fourteenth time I address the General Assembly, and this time I have come here with a heavy heart. I have come here just after seeing the hungry, distressed and hopeless Rohingya from Myanmar who have taken shelter in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. This forcibly displaced people of Myanmar are fleeing an ethnic cleansing in their own country, where they have been living for centuries. I can feel their pain because I and my younger sister were refugees for six years after my father, the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and almost all members of my family were assassinated in 1975.

In 1974, in Bangladesh's first-ever address to the General Assembly, my father said,

> "I know that the souls of our martyrs join us in pledging that the Bangalee nation fully commits itself to the building of a world order in which the aspiration of all men for peace and justice will be realized" (*A/PV.2243, para. 2*).

We are currently sheltering more than 800,000 forcibly displaced Rohingya from Myanmar. The ongoing atrocities and human rights violations in the Rakhine state of Myanmar have once again aggravated the situation at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya from Rakhine state are entering Bangladesh to flee violence. As estimated by the International Organization for Migration, in the past three weeks alone, over 430,000 Rohingya entered Bangladesh. We are horrified to see that the Myanmar authorities are laying landmines along their stretch of the border to prevent the Rohingya from returning to their country. This people must be able to return to their homeland in safety, security and dignity.

At the same time, I also condemn every kind of terrorism and violent extremism. Our Government maintains a zero-tolerance policy in this regard. I thank the Secretary-General and members of the Security Council for their proactive attempts to stop the atrocities and bring peace and stability to Rakhine state in Myanmar.

I further call on the United Nations and the international community to take immediate and effective measures in order to achieve a permanent solution to this protracted Rohingya crisis. In this regard, I propose the following actions. First, Myanmar must unconditionally, immediately and permanently stop the violence and the practice of ethnic cleansing in Rakhine state. Secondly, the Secretary-General should immediately send a fact-finding mission to Myanmar. Thirdly, all civilians irrespective of religion and ethnicity must be protected in Myanmar. To that end, safe zones could be created inside Myanmar under United Nations supervision. Fourthly, the sustainable return of all forcibly displaced Rohingya in Bangladesh to their homes in Myanmar must be ensured. Fifthly, the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Foundation Advisory Commission report must be immediately and unconditionally implemented in their entirety.

In the 1971 war of liberation against Pakistan, we endured an extreme form of genocide. In the nine-month war, some 3 million innocent people were killed and more than 200,000 women violated. The Pakistani military launched the heinous Operation Searchlight on 25 March, marking the start of the 1971 genocide. This genocide involved the targeted elimination of individuals on the grounds of religion, race and political belief. Intellectuals were brutally killed. To pay homage to the victims of the genocide, our national parliament recently declared 25 March Genocide Day.

In Bangladesh, we have already undertaken the daunting task of bringing the key perpetrators to justice through the International Crimes Tribunal. I urge the international community to take collective action to prevent the recurrence of such heinous crimes as these anywhere anytime. I believe that acknowledging past tragedies such as the 1971 genocide could guide us to achieving "never again".

Since our birth as a nation, we have pursued peace-centric domestic and foreign policies. In that spirit, Bangladesh has taken the lead in introducing the resolution on a culture of peace every year in the General Assembly since 2000.

We reaffirm the call for a resumption of the Middle East peace process and for ending all forms of hostilities and discrimination against the brotherly Palestinian people.

In recognition of the potential role of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, we look forward to receiving bold and innovative proposals from the Secretary-General on financing for sustaining peace. I

am pleased to announce a contribution of $100,000 from Bangladesh for the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.

As a major troop- and police-contributing country, Bangladesh underscores the importance of upholding the effectiveness and credibility of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We shall maintain our own capability readiness, remain open to further smart pledges, enhance the scope of our peacekeeping training and deploy more female peacekeepers.

We maintain a zero-tolerance approach to any allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse. As an endorser of the Voluntary Compact on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, I am committed to the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership to combat this scourge. I am also pleased to announce a contribution of $100,000 to the Victim Support Fund established for this purpose.

Terrorism and violent extremism have become a major threat to peace, stability and development. Terrorists have no religion, belief or race. Having been the target of a number of terrorist attacks myself, I personally empathize with the victims of terrorism and appreciate their need for protection.

We denounce the use of religion to justify violent extremism. I have involved families, women, young people, the media and religious leaders at the community level to offset the spread of violent extremism. In this regard, I reiterate my calls, first, for stopping the supply of arms to terrorists; secondly, for preventing terrorist financing; and, thirdly, for the peaceful settlement of all international disputes. I also urge the United Nations to address the growing threats emanating from cyberspace in order to prevent money-laundering, terrorist financing and other transnational organized crimes.

We believe in promoting safe, orderly and regular migration. Last year, we proposed developing a sound migration governance framework through the global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration. I am pleased that the United Nations is delivering on the formation of the compact for migration and refugees.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change remains our bastion of hope for climate justice. By recognizing climate vulnerability, we are building resilience against the grave impacts of climate change. We believe in the potential of the blue economy in advancing the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and seas.

Bangladesh has achieved exemplary success in building resilience against flood and other disasters. Crop intensification and the invention of water-resistant crops have helped us achieve self-sufficiency in food. We have efficiently responded to the massive flood that struck the entire South Asian region this year.

As a member of the United Nations High-level Panel on Water, I attach high priority to implementing its comprehensive action plan. Bangladesh ensured access to safe water for 87 per cent of its population by 2015, and we aim for full access to safe water for our population by 2030.

We believe that there are close links between peace, stability and development. We share the conviction that addressing poverty, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment and inequality is crucial to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies. We are committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In that regard, our Government has adopted a whole-of-society approach. The SDGs complement our vision to transform Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed one by 2041.

Even before the adoption of the SDGs, we initiated unique social programmes that reflect the themes of the SDGs, such as the Ekti Bari Ekti Khamar — "One Household One Farm" project; community clinics; the Ashrayan shelter project and the Digital Bangladesh initiative. We also promote education support, women's empowerment, education for all, the social safety net, environmental protection, and investment and development. Our voluntary national review presented to the United Nations this year showcased our progress in and commitment to achieving the SDGs.

In 2016-2017, Bangladesh's economy posted a gross domestic product growth rate of more than 7.24 per cent, and our foreign currency reserves reached $32.1 billion. We have lowered the poverty rate from 56.7 per cent in 1991 to 23.2 per cent today. Our per capita income is expected to grow to $1,602 by the end of the current fiscal year, from only $543 in 2005-2006. Our life expectancy has increased to almost 72 years. These figures are indications of our inclusive development, in which no citizen is left behind.

To ensure inclusive growth, promote investment and employment opportunities for all, we have launched an initiative to develop 100 special economic zones around the country. Our extensive social safety net measures give coverage to many vulnerable segments

of our population, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, victims of domestic violence and vulnerable mothers under economic hardship.

Special emphasis has been given to unlocking the potentials of physically challenged children and people. Some 103 service and care centres, along with 32 mobile therapy vans, attend to the needs of persons with disabilities, including those affected by autism. A total of 18,500 community health clinics are being complemented by medical services through the use of mobile phones and web cameras in districts and subdistricts.

There is now a public primary school in every village of the country, and 38,331 educational institutions have been equipped with digital laboratories and multimedia classrooms. Special emphasis is being placed on promoting technical and vocational education and training for young people.

Our youth are the main movers in realizing my vision for a knowledge-based, digital Bangladesh. We are working to create an environment to allow them to pursue transformative education, find decent jobs and turn into truly global citizens.

I am happy to announce that Bangabandhu-1, our very first satellite, is scheduled to be launched this year on our Victory Day, 16 December.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that we do not want war. We want peace. We seek the well-being of humankind, not its destruction. We want sustainable development. Let this be our collective goal.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the statement she has just made.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Tabimasmas (Vanuatu) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to make this statement on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Vanuatu. I join other speakers in congratulating His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. As an elected Vice-President of this organ, Vanuatu is pleased to work closely with you, Sir, as you guide us through this session. Please be assured that you have the full support of my delegation.

I would also like to commend His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for his vision, leadership and dedication during his tenure as President of the Assembly during the seventy-first session. Allow me also to express my profound gratitude to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his notable leadership to this day.

On behalf of my people, the people of Vanuatu, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the victims of the earthquake in Mexico, to the victims of Hurricanes Maria and Irma, which devastated the Caribbean, and to the victims of Hurricane Harvey, which ravaged Texas.

My delegation welcomes the theme of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". This is a timely and necessary theme. It is timely because, when we look around, we see a world plunged in endless political conflicts and turmoil. We are witnessing an escalation of extremism and violence caused by racism, xenophobia, hostility and intolerance. The theme is also necessary because we must remember that the human being and a sustainable future are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Today, 72 years after the creation of the United Nations, doubts continue to weigh on us. When will all nations, rich and poor, and people of all races, learn to live together in peace, embracing diversity and practicing tolerance? We must ask ourselves when conflicts and wars will become scourges of the past. At one time or another in the last 72 years, we have failed in our duty to be a United Nations endeavouring to achieve the economic and social advancement of all

our peoples and to join forces to promote peace and security in the world.

The world continues to face economic and political challenges, and the world economy remains confined to a prolonged period of slow growth, with a global gross product estimated to grow by some 2.7 per cent in 2017. This is only an economic stabilization and does not respond to growth in world demand. The rise of terrorism, violent extremism, asymmetric wars and political instability in the world have reached an unprecedented level in 2017 and will continue to weigh on the economic prospects of many regions.

Vanuatu continues to be seriously concerned about the large movements of refugees and migrants, many of whom are fleeing violent conflict, disasters and poverty. In 2016, some 65 million people were forcibly displaced around the world. The rural exodus to the city and a relatively high rate of urbanization also present the same challenges at the national level.

Vanuatu notes with deep concern the irrefutable link between the global crisis and the failure to respect the principles of the responsibility to protect and the prevention of mass atrocity crimes in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and South Sudan, to cite only a few.

As a small island State exposed to the rising sea level that will overwhelm its islands and force its people to seek refuge, I would like to appeal to the international community to mobilize its efforts and to begin the debate on the establishment of an international legal framework that will truly solve the problem of climate-change refugees from small island States.

As a small island State in the Pacific, Vanuatu is a strong supporter of a rules-based international regime through which States act fairly and transparently with each other, and through which economic development could come to fruition and where peace and security in the world could be maintained. That is why Vanuatu has faith in the United Nations. The United Nations remains for Vanuatu the best hope and catalyst for regional and global peace and security. I would like to highlight the valuable and potential work that this body has done to lift millions out of poverty, promote and protect human rights, and bring about an international order seen in much of the world today. However, to remain relevant, there is a need for strategic reforms.

Being a permanent member of the Security Council is more a responsibility than a privilege. It is therefore incumbent on the Council to disregard the political interests of both sides and to seek compromise solutions. It is essential to ensure that the Security Council meets the objectives, principles and promises of the Charter of the United Nations. We support the reforms of the Security Council that reflect current geopolitical dynamics and provide for a more equitable regional representation as well as a continuous reform of the United Nations peacekeeping operations to better prevent and resolve complex conflicts in our contemporary world and to better protect civilians.

My Government welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda (A/72/124). I am particularly encouraged by the fact that the report highlights the need to have more robust coordination and accountability procedures within the United Nations system and realign it to better respond to countries' efforts to implement the transformative 2030 Agenda.

Earlier this year, we launched our national sustainable development plan to 2030, also known as the People's Plan, which encompasses sustainable development goals. We know that the way ahead to implement this national road map will be tough, given structural weaknesses, extreme weather events, frequent earthquakes and external economic shocks. Vanuatu has ranked as one of the most disaster-prone countries for four years in a row. To make the path even more difficult, the General Assembly has planned to remove Vanuatu's status as a least developed country (LDC) in December 2020. Unfortunately, the fact that we have developed and emerged from LDC status does not mean that we have eliminated our vulnerabilities and structural barriers.

My Government calls on the United Nations to ensure that the change in the status of a country like ours does not cause disruption or hamper our development. The measures in place to support the change in LDC status are simply insufficient given the challenges that these countries will face. The transition mechanisms after such a change must be further strengthened. Vanuatu calls on the United Nations to continue to recognize Vanuatu as an LDC, rather than completely eliminating the specific support for it as an LDC. We also call on development partners and aid agencies to consider gradually reducing LDC development assistance. There should be clear provisions for reducing trade benefits

to LDCs, stipulated in bilateral agreements and by the World Trade Organization.

My Government is also concerned about threats to peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. The provocative missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea violates several Security Council resolutions and poses an unprecedented threat to security in the region and around the world. Vanuatu condemns in the strongest terms the most recent round of missile launches and joins with the international community in encouraging the Administration of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to end its nuclear and missile development programme. We also call on the United Nations to find common ground with the Republic and to engage in dialogue for a peaceful solution.

My Government reaffirms its commitment to the denuclearization of the Pacific and welcomes the Treaty adopted at the conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument banning nuclear weapons. Vanuatu reaffirms its commitment to complete nuclear disarmament.

The report on regionalism recently published by the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat provides a geopolitical assessment of the trends, threats and opportunities for regional development and political aspirations. It includes strategies that Forum members can use to build a stronger, more resilient and responsive Pacific region. We in the Pacific know how important it is to work in unison, because it is through unity that we are stronger and can achieve positive results. Similarly, the actions of the United Nations are more decisive when members are united.

Our understanding of the science of climate change has deepened over the past few years, and its devastating impact knows no borders. The terrible earthquake in Mexico, Hurricane Maria and Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean, Hurricane Harvey in Texas and tropical storm Pam, which devastated Vanuatu in 2015, are brutal warnings from Mother Nature that the climate is changing faster than our efforts to counter that change. Solving a problem that has taken centuries to manifest itself requires more reflection and effort on our part. By collectively reducing the rate at which we emit greenhouse gases, we can make a major difference. We can limit the average rise in temperature to less than 1.5°C, change the chemistry of the oceans, manage sea-level rise and prevent disasters for generations to come. We urge all States Members of the United Nations to persevere. We therefore urge the United States, as part of the one world we have, to reverse its decision and enforce the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

My country is deeply concerned about climate change and the Paris Agreement, and we are committed to reversing the decline in the health of our oceans. The United Nations Ocean Conference, held here in New York in June, has shown that the quality of the oceans, which contribute to our livelihoods, has been seriously undermined and that urgent and immediate attention on our part is required, now more than ever before. We are from an island nation surrounded by a vast ocean and know how important it is. We are very concerned about the health of the ocean because it has an impact on humankind's survival.

My Government is committed to implementing the resolutions of the Conference, including Sustainable Development Goal 14, by 2030, through partnerships and national efforts. We are committed to achieving our national goal of 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030, with the support of our development partners. We have launched our national oceans policy, but we will also ban the use of plastic bags by 2018 in order to reduce the amount of ocean debris and preserve its health. At the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting in Apia, I called on the leaders and peoples of the Pacific island countries to join Vanuatu in this struggle and to be more responsible in preserving our blue Pacific Ocean in order to guarantee human survival.

My Government remains fully committed to achieving its national sustainable development plan. We have begun to meet the challenge of turning our goals into tangible action. My Government pledges to submit Vanuatu's voluntary report in mid-2018. We hope to share our progress and our failures in meeting our sustainable development goals, while fully respecting the continuity of the partnership for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Vanuatu is convinced that in order to end poverty, opportunities for all people, in particular women, must be made available. Greater access must be given to education, nutrition and health. My Government is committed to eliminating the barriers that disproportionately affect our vulnerable groups. We successfully launched our national policies on gender equality and the protection of children in November 2016. Both policies take into account violence and discrimination against women and girls, as well as

the neglect, exploitation and abuse of and violence against children. We are also aware that a balanced and equitable distribution of the necessary resources and infrastructure in our provinces will help to develop the provinces and reduce poverty.

My Government is committed to ensuring a peaceful, just and inclusive society and to building responsive institutions capable of delivering quality services to our citizens. We work with our development partners to enhance the resilience and adaptability of our peoples to climate change and natural disasters. My Government is committed to structural reform to ensure political and economic stability, based on equitable and sustainable growth that would create jobs and increase our citizens' incomes.

My Government sincerely thanks our traditional development partners for their contribution to the economic development of our country. We are ready to forge new partnerships to further stimulate our productive and infrastructure sectors.

My Government is concerned about the fact that the United Nations has lost much of its ability and willingness to implement Security Council resolution 1514 (1960), of 14 December 1960, which called for an swift and unconditional end to colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. Decolonization must return to the agenda of the United Nations, and all efforts must be free of the pressures of international politics. We all have a collective responsibility to guarantee the self-determination of peoples under the colonial yoke.

We firmly believe that territorial disputes should be resolved peacefully, while respecting cultural heritage and adhering to United Nations conventions and to the provisions of international law of the sea. In that regard, I should like to point out that there have been recent incursions into disputed areas of Vanuatu, which is not in keeping with United Nations principles or the provisions of international law of the sea.

For half a century, the international community has witnessed several instances of torture, murder, exploitation, sexual violence and arbitrary arrest that the people of West Papua have suffered at the hands of the Indonesians, and it has ignored their voices and calls for help. We urge the Human Rights Council to investigate those abuses. We also call on our leading partners around the world to support the legal right to self-determination of West Papua. We call on them, along with Indonesia, to end all forms of violence and find common ground with the citizens of West Papua in order to facilitate a process that will enable them to freely express their will.

I return to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations to reaffirm the belief in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of men and women, and of nations, great and small. I believe that we all have an obligation to work together to lift the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on the Republic of Cuba. Removing those restrictions will, inter alia, enable the Cuban people to enjoy their human rights.

New Caledonia is in the critical phase of deciding its future, as the 2018 referendum is quickly approaching. We thank all countries, in particular France, that have supported the process thus far. We urge the administering Power to ensure that the referendum is fair and transparent and that the wishes of the people are honoured. We also call on France to facilitate a fair and transparent process of self-determination for French Polynesia.

In conclusion, as we begin the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, let us work together with a specific goal in mind: to respond judiciously to the many challenges we face for the common good of humankind. May God bless the States Members of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Umaro Sissoco Embaló, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Umaro Sissoco Embaló, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Umaro Sissoco Embaló, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Embaló (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I am honoured to stand at this rostrum and speak to the international community gathered here in the full expression of our universality.

Allow me to convey greetings from the people of Guinea-Bissau to all Heads of State and Government, representatives of the States Members of the United Nations, who have come to add pomp and substance to this session of the General Assembly.

I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. To your predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson, I would like to express our recognition of his performance and wish him continued success in his remarkable diplomatic career.

As we all know, the world today is full of complex and grave challenges, such as hotspots of political instability and geopolitical tension around the world, the seriousness of which cannot be overlooked by the statesmen and citizens of the world; the scourge of terrorism, which unfortunately does not seem to be abating, as a phenomenon that deserves our unanimous condemnation; the human tragedy of migration waves, particularly those crossing the Mediterranean, and the saga of refugees; glaring social inequality, the expanding geography of poverty, and the intensity of human suffering, which we see in vast areas of the planet; and the sorrow of racial, gender and religious discrimination and the threat of climate breakdown on a planetary scale, with prospects of frightening, and not unlikely, consequences. In short, it is not difficult to imagine how many ills of the world are addressed by the United Nations on a daily basis, and require the attention and constructive engagement of the international community represented here.

The United Nations has a long history of solidarity with and commitment to Guinea-Bissau. It began with our struggle for national liberation and has not been broken since. Our goal is to further strengthen our institutional engagement with the United Nations. In so doing, we are merely reaffirming our firm belief in international law, peace and security among nations and the social and moral progress of humankind, which are the values on which the United Nations was created.

We continue to be going through a period of institutional challenges in Guinea-Bissau, for which the Conakry Accord laid out a solution in October 2016. There are challenges related to the functioning of some of our core political institutions, namely the Parliament and the Government, but it is with profound solemnity that I inform the General Assembly that civilian peace reigns in my country. There are no reports of universal human rights violations that merit complaints or that are worthy of concern.

Public safety indicators related to people and property follow a normal pattern. Regular payments are being made to public servants, and on the foreign debt service and internal arrears. The marketing campaign for our main export crop, cashew nuts, broke all records, which had a positive impact on the social environment in Guinea-Bissau. Recently, our public finance controls were praised by the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral partners. The State and civil society are very far from any political breakdown. Indeed, we are fortunately not counting the dead or injured in Guinea-Bissau, nor are we assessing any damage to public property resulting from a breakdown in the authority of the State.

The most recently held summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which convened in Monrovia, placed its trust in the Bissau-Guinean people's determination to internally resolve the problems related to the political and institutional impasse that has affected my country for the past two years. In that regard, we are pleased that the African Union, at its most recent summit in Addis Ababa; the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) Council of Ministers meeting in Brasilia; and the United Nations put the political situation in Guinea-Bissau back on their agendas. With the patience, wisdom and solidarity of our international partners — ECOWAS, the African Union, the CPLP and the Secretary-General, who is retaining his Special Representative in Guinea-Bissau — we will overcome the political and institutional impasse that persists in my country.

We have taken note of the General Assembly's agenda, which, in fact, is largely consistent with our own hopes and concerns. The subregion of the Economic Community of West African States where Guinea-Bissau is located has significant potential for economic growth, consistent poverty reduction and the sharing of social welfare. There is nothing unattainable in our dream to drive — at the subregional level, together, in peace and security, and with productive work — the inclusive social progress that we all desire.

We have examples of success in our subregion, but we also see distressing signs on the ECOWAS horizon of potential threats to both the internal constitutional order of States and geopolitical stability in the subregion. Terrorist acts are seriously affecting Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, with clear and grave consequences for peace, social cohesion and stability.

Guinea-Bissau fully supports the pooling of efforts in the context of the Group of Five for the Sahel, advocates the integrity of Mali, and calls for an all-out fight against terrorism in all its manifestations. Indeed, in order to face so many challenges at the same time, namely internal security, the preservation of the territorial integrity of States and peacekeeping within the space of ECOWAS, we need help. We therefore count on the United Nations and all of its specialized agencies, and all our international partners. Only if we work together will we be able to transform our subregion into a bastion of peace and internal security and, by extension, a bastion in the service of international security.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a challenge, but no development strategy is worthy of such a title if, in the case of Guinea-Bissau, it does not begin by placing the issue of food security squarely and sustainably at the core of its concept. To let Guinea-Bissau, a country with a widely recognized agricultural capacity, slip into dependence on large volumes of imported rice every year was certainly one of the worst economic policy mistakes that was made. The challenge we face is very clear. It is the political and economic challenge of food security. It is the moral challenge of overcoming poverty. It is the test of ensuring zero hunger in Guinea-Bissau.

With that as the focus of our approach, we are merely restating the central item on the General Assembly's agenda in another way — promoting health from cradle to the grave. I will surprise no one when I state that there is no positive health indicator that can stand against the violence of poverty, hunger or malnutrition. There is no way to bring down the morbidity and mortality indicators that assail us as a result of the scourges of AIDS, malaria, diarrhoea and infectious diseases, without sustained poverty reduction, and if we do not successfully take on the moral challenge of zero hunger.

At a more specific level, my country has made progress with regard to the health care that we provide to our population, in particular to children and women of reproductive age. However, given that the State alone is unable to guarantee that public service to the entire population, we continue to rely on international cooperation and United Nations support through its specialized institutions. But health and poverty are not the only elements that go hand in hand. In the context of poverty and extreme nutritional deficiency, we do not see how we can aim for good education for our children.

According to recognized scientific criteria, 12 per cent of Guinea-Bissau's territory is comprised of ecologically protected areas. In that regard, I can say without hesitation that one of our most important educational achievements has been the development of a vigilant, ecological awareness of an increasingly sharp and active sense of environmental responsibility, in particular among the youth of Guinea-Bissau — the foundation of our future. But we are realistic; we have a long road ahead of us and much effort to be made in order to ensure environmental sustainability, as we economically exploit our natural resources. We consider the Paris Agreement to be a fundamental victory in harmonizing States' environmental policies and in their promotion worldwide.

We must enhance our relations with the People's Republic of China, a country that has been our friend since the difficult years of our struggle for national liberation. As the One China policy is consistent with peace and security in the region and with China's yearning for its unity to be restored, we reiterate our full solidarity with the People's Republic of China.

Security Council reform remains a need that the international community has rightly highlighted. Guinea-Bissau's position is the same one that we, as an African country, advocated for and adopted within the framework of the African Union.

I express the solidarity of the people and the Government of Guinea-Bissau to the people of the Republic of Sierra Leone, who have suffered greatly from the natural disaster that has assailed their country. We also offer our solidarity to all countries that have been victimized by natural disasters that cause irreparable loss of human lives, the destruction of property and great suffering among the survivors.

I express the unfailing solidarity of Guinea-Bissau to the Republic of Cuba, which has provided support

to the Bissau-Guinean people at our most challenging moments. Today, as in the past, we call for the lifting of the economic embargo that has prevented that friendly nation from developing normally for more than 60 years.

We also support the hopes of the Palestinian people for the establishment of their own State, coexisting side by side with the State of Israel, based on trust, peace and security.

I will close my remarks with a reference to the women of Guinea-Bissau. I would like to say that women in Guinea-Bissau are still far from taking the place that they deserve in our society and in our institutions in general. The policy of gender equality — more specifically of equal opportunity for girls and women in Guinea-Bissau — is undoubtedly a test for my country's democracy. It is a great challenge for our political parties and all Government officials in Guinea-Bissau. I hope that all of the political, economic and social actors in my country will continue to converge on the legitimate advocacy for women's rights and, in general, for the promotion of human rights in Guinea-Bissau.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Umaro Sissoco Embaló, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Selom Komi Klassou, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic.

Mr. Selom Komi Klassou, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Selom Komi Klassou, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Klassou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): It is indeed both a pleasure and an honour to address the General Assembly and to convey cordial greetings from the President of the Togolese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, who, because of a last-minute commitment, could not be here with us in New York. I take the floor to deliver the following message on his behalf.

"It is with a renewed sense of joy that we take part in the seventy-second regular session of the General Assembly, which is dedicated to a theme that is as revealing as it is inspiring — 'Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet'.

"First and foremost, I would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, on his election. I would also like to reiterate my congratulations to the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and assure him of Togo's support during his tenure, as we strive to achieve the noble objectives of our Organization.

"The theme of this session reminds us that human beings and the well-being of our peoples must remain the priority of our actions, both at the national level and at the international level as we pool our efforts. In the context of our debates, this theme raises the issue of human security, which encompasses both the imperatives of peace, development, access to quality health care, a healthy environment, food security and jobs, in particular for young people.

"Those challenges that our State faces, in particular the developing countries, are a reminder of the importance of implementing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, all of which we adopted together.

"In that regard, my country is working actively to adopt its national development plan before the end of the year. That plan will replace the strategy for accelerated growth, development and the promotion of employment for the period 2018-2022, which is coming to an end. The new development planning document will identify priorities and define the appropriate actions to be implemented in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

"With that in mind, in February 2017, the Government set up a strategic monitoring unit for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and international development agreements. The unit is tasked with monitoring the progress of priority action undertaken on those fronts. Togo, which is preparing to take a seat on the Economic and Social Council as of 1 January 2018, is committed to taking an active part in the various actions and

initiatives of the Council, with a view to achieving a harmonious and resolute implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

"The quest for the well-being of people is at the core of the general policy of the Togolese Government. That need guides sectoral initiatives on a day-to-day basis by giving priority to the most vulnerable groups, such as women, children and young people. More specifically, my country, while maintaining consistency in the progress already achieved in the areas of economic growth, poverty reduction and the promotion of a peaceful and participatory democracy, spares no effort in its attempt to ensure genuine inclusive and sustainable growth for the population.

"The emergency community development programme, designed to complement the programme for vulnerable populations, for the period 2016-2018, aims to help bring about considerable improvement in the living conditions of people in communities where basic social and economic services and infrastructure highlight social inequalities. Over the long term, those inequalities must be reduced with targeted action so as to meet urgent and priority needs, carried out in synergy with other activities that are part of normal sectoral policies. Such action focuses primarily on access to drinking water, access to energy, rural entrepreneurship and agribusiness, productivity and wealth creation, employment, the empowerment of women and young people, and social protection.

"With regard to social protection, for example, it should be noted that, following the decision to make education free of charge in 2008 and school canteens gradually available to all public-school children, the Government decided to establish a social and medical benefits system for schoolchildren. That measure, which will be extended to private secular and faith-based sectors in the coming years, will cater to 2 million children involved in the pilot phase of the project.

"In addition, in the field of health, the development of the new national health development plan for the period 2017-2022 enables the Government to provide appropriate solutions to the problems identified and to align national priorities with those of the Sustainable Development Goals.

"The harmonious and sustainable development of Togo cannot be achieved without peace, social cohesion, the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law. Above and beyond the various action taken to improve the well-being of the population, those requirements to achieve such development will also depend on the political, institutional and constitutional reforms under way. In that regard, drawing on the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Government recently transmitted to the National Assembly for consideration a bill on articles 52, 59 and 60 of the Constitution of 14 October 1992, relating in particular to limiting mandates to a term of five years, renewable once, for members of the National Assembly and the President of the Republic, and to the voting method, which is a first-past-the-post system with two rounds.

"That reform project, which meets the profound hopes and desires of the Togolese people, was adopted just three days ago, on Tuesday, 19 September, by more than two thirds of the members of the National Assembly. It should be underscored that that process was carried out in accordance with the provisions of article 144 of the Constitution, which stipulates the procedure for constitutional revision as follows:

> 'The bill or the proposal of revision is considered as adopted if it is voted with the majority of four fifths of the deputies composing the National Assembly. In default of this majority, the bill or proposal of revision, adopted with the majority of two thirds of the deputies composing the National Assembly, is submitted to referendum.'

"In addition, the voting on the bill or proposal by a two-thirds majority of the members of the National Assembly raises the issue of constitutional reform directly with the people through the holding of a referendum. A bill will be submitted immediately to the people for ratification. As the history of our country reflects, a referendum will enable the country to freely and fully exercise its sovereignty, by making the text of the Constitution a fundamental norm.

"With regard to human rights, the will of the Togolese Government to fulfil its obligations in the protection and promotion of such rights

is irreversible. It was a long-term undertaking, but Togo remained committed to consolidating the gains made and to further strengthening the measures guaranteeing fundamental freedoms. We will also continue to work within our mandate at the Human Rights Council, which expires in 2018, in order to ensure that that body plays its full role in respecting human rights and protecting the well-being of the peoples of the world.

"With regard to the challenges facing our States, I call on the entire international community to take responsible action to mitigate the threat of global warming. The quality of life of the people on our planet must be preserved for the good of future generations. My country, which often faces the vagaries of coastal erosion, flooding and irregular rainy seasons, believes that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change remains an ideal framework for carrying out joint initiatives that will safeguard the climate.

"In West Africa, the recent bad weather, which resulted in significant loss of life in Sierra Leone and tens of thousands of victims in the Niger, has conjured up in people's memories the spectre of the terrible Ebola crisis that the subregion had to deal with two years ago. Those losses, which we all lament, should compel our individual States and those outside the African continent to act urgently to develop a rigorous and effective plan for ensuring that our peoples have decent living standards and a resilient health-care system, with particular emphasis on our technical services' early-warning and prevention capabilities. To that end, I would like to urge States to work together to intensify our efforts, not only to prevent the resurgence of previously eradicated epidemics but also to significantly reduce and even eliminate other diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, which, tragically, continue to cause many casualties in Africa.

"The era we live in has also been marked by a surge in new security challenges, from maritime insecurity to terrorism, which we must fight in all their forms. Maritime insecurity undermines our development, deprives our people of vital resources and creates areas of lawlessness that criminal networks try to exploit for their various types of trafficking. Togo was therefore pleased with the success of the African Union's Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Security, Safety and Development in Africa, held in Lomé in October 2016. Today, thanks to the commitment of the States that participated in the Summit, we now have the African Union Charter on Maritime Security, Safety and Development, a harmonized, legally binding instrument aimed at promoting the development of the blue economy in Africa. I would also like to take this opportunity to invite and encourage countries that have not yet signed the Lomé Charter to do so, and thereby strengthen the legal framework for regulating our States' joint action, under the auspices of the African Union, for preserving our seas and oceans.

"We cannot deny that we will never be able to achieve the goal that is the theme of this year's session if we do not intensify our efforts to maintain world peace and security. The recent terrorist attacks in France, Great Britain, Spain, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and other countries have highlighted the importance of concerted action on the part of the entire international community if we are to tackle this scourge, which knows no borders and does not discriminate among its targets. That is why in the region where it is most prevalent in Africa, the Sahel, I commend the initiative of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel, which will help us further strengthen inter-State cooperation, and urge the most affluent countries among us to support the push for an effective fight that will enable us to eradicate terrorism in that part of Africa. In that regard, I was particularly pleased with the Secretary-General's establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism in June. Eliminating radicalism and religious fundamentalism should also be a major priority for our States, along with our urgent duty to provide convincing alternatives, especially for young people, that can guarantee their future and shield them from the rhetoric of hatred and other appeals to violence.

"In view of the major challenge that migration represents today and the security crisis it creates, we should take strong measures not only to limit the ever-increasing demands placed on countries of destination but especially to tackle the problem where it begins, in the countries of origin. Finding adequate solutions to the migration crisis also means finding definitive solutions to the various conflicts that undermine the ability of the States

concerned to ensure effective control over their borders and result in the massive displacement of populations seeking security and a better life outside their own countries. We all know that the crises in Syria and Libya, and the fierce fight that the Iraqi Government is currently waging against the Islamic State, are not confined to those countries' borders, but have attendant results that include the destabilization of their regions, worsening terrorism and a migration crisis. In that regard, it is Togo's hope that in Africa, the various initiatives of the African Union and other regional organizations, supported by the United Nations, will help to resolve the disputes in South Sudan and restore stability in Libya.

"In Asia, the recent missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have raised tensions within the international community, sparked heated debates in the Security Council and increased people's fears, particularly in Japan and the Republic of Korea. I urge the main protagonists to exercise restraint and reason in order to preserve peace and stability in the region. There can be no question that only dialogue and concerted efforts can settle this issue.

"The challenges that our world is facing are having a real impact on Africa's development. If we are to tackle them effectively, one of the most urgent tasks still ahead of us is the economic transformation of the continent. We are well aware that it is the African elite that has primary responsibility for that transformation, but we would also like to emphasize the importance in that regard of international solidarity. Besides the efforts that must be made to implement the SDGs, it will be crucial to foster investment in Africa, particularly in science, industry, agribusiness and advanced technology. Our transformation will also require the efforts of the various regional economic communities. By ensuring that their peoples and economies are properly integrated, they can promote African integration generally and thereby contribute to harmonious development in Africa as a whole.

"In my capacity as current Chairperson of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I pledge to work with my colleagues to make our shared space an ECOWAS of our peoples, in accordance with the objectives of our organization. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners and invite them to continue to work alongside our States and the ECOWAS Commission with a view to translating our multiple initiatives into concrete action.

"The United Nations has helped the world to make a great deal of progress in the areas of peace and security, the promotion of human rights and the preservation of our planet. It has been able to achieve those advances thanks to its revitalization of some of its organs and, above all, by adapting them to the changes that have taken place since the Organization was founded. With regard to reform of the Security Council, Togo believes that Member States should resolve to conclude the process, which began more than two decades ago, with the goal of making the Council more effective. We hope that significant progress can be made in that direction during this session. The reforms should also encompass our peacekeeping forces. In that regard, we commend the Secretary-General's initiative for a draft compact between the United Nations and its Member States on eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse during peacekeeping operations, and we hope that all States will adhere to it so as to put an end to this problem for good.

"I firmly believe that, by working together during this session, the General Assembly will make a significant contribution to strengthening our States' commitment to making our planet a world of shared peace and prosperity for the well-being of our peoples."

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Selom Komi Klassou, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Makei, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Makei (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The past few decades have been marked by two contradictory trends — increasing political fragmentation and increasing economic globalization. The first of those is associated with the global political instability that has resulted from wars, conflicts, terrorism, xenophobia and other factors and that is giving rise to a feeling

of mounting chaos and despair. Why are we in this predicament? Because we did not truly put an end to our last momentous conflict, the Cold War. It did not end with a peace treaty, as had always been the case with previous major wars. As a result, we were left without the generally accepted frameworks that could have guided our subsequent behaviour. The various Powers formed differing interpretations of this state of geopolitical uncertainty and acted accordingly. What seemed obvious and legitimate to some was incomprehensible and illegitimate for others. Basically, all the problems that have accumulated since the early 1990s are the legacy of our inability to bring an end the Cold War once and for all. But it is never too late to do the right thing.

Last year, the President of Belarus came up with the idea of launching a new negotiating process similar to the Helsinki process of the 1970s, while, needless to say, keeping in mind the problems and threats that are relevant to us today. We believe that the possibility of expanding and reconsidering that format is worth discussing. We propose that the key global players, particularly China, Russia, the United States of America and the States of the European Union, engage in a dialogue on a strategic vision for new and constructive relations. For its part, the Republic of Belarus is ready to provide the forum for such a dialogue. We are willing to carry out that task with the same responsibility that we have shown over the past few years in the efforts to settle the crisis in Ukraine. Minsk is prepared to be the bridge that can connect the issues of the past with those yet to come. We believe that the agreements that could result from such a dialogue would, in essence, put an end to that last major war. They could subsequently be implemented through the active engagement of the United Nations, and with that, stop the growing political fragmentation in the world in its tracks. Some may consider this unrealistic in today's world, but three years ago the President of the Republic of Belarus's proposal to send peacekeepers to Ukraine was greeted in exactly the same way, and yet now that idea has been revived and is being actively discussed in the United Nations.

Growing globalization, the second of the two trends under discussion, has undoubtedly contributed to progress and economic development worldwide, but it too has its downside. The fact is that the majority of the world's population has not been able to enjoy its benefits, especially in the past few decades, and as a consequence, we have been unable to eliminate poverty and inequality has steadily risen. Much has been said in recent years, including from this rostrum, about the economic reasons for this situation, but to put it bluntly, the global economy has not been run according to a win-win formula. It is designed to suit the interests not of ordinary people but of corporate capital. As a result, economic globalization has not been that rising tide that lifts all boats.

Nevertheless, there are are some grounds for optimism. We base that on two factors — regional integration and new creative ideas in the global economy. Regional integration is a key feature of today's world. Where it is successful, it leaves less room for political fragmentation. Belarus has been actively involved in a number of integration processes in its region. This year, for example, we hold the chairmanship of the Central European Initiative. In the past few years, Belarus has been vigorously advocating for cooperation and interconnectivity among regional processes, an approach we call "integrating integrations". It is based on the assumption that, in terms of structural functionality, today's world is made up of regions as well as countries. We firmly believe that cooperation among regional integration processes is as essential to their functioning as it is to that of States. And where creative new ideas are concerned, we would like to single out the One Belt, One Road initiative promoted by the People's Republic of China, which represents a new type of economic multilateralism, one that seeks to bring benefits not only to its individual participants but to the global economy as a whole and is a true win-win approach. The Republic of Belarus both participates in and supports that initiative. In our view, "integrating integrations" and One Belt, One Road can help us shift the global economy from a path of divergence to one of convergence. Globalization must become more fair.

How can the United Nations help to address the challenges posed by political fragmentation and uneven economic globalization? One of its primary tasks in the previous century was to prevent the great Powers from waging wars among themselves. It succeeded in that task, providing a forum where opposing parties could work towards a positive end. The result was that a third World War did not happen.

Today the realities are different, and they require us to reconsider the Organization's role and place in our world. In particular, the question is about how the United Nations fits into a world that is increasingly dominated

by various closed clubs and informal entities. We believe that, as it has always done, the United Nations must work to strengthen the system of inter-State relations. It is at the United Nations that its Members can successfully resolve their differences, forge mutually acceptable solutions and tackle transboundary threats. For its part, the United Nations should serve as a unifying force for the international relations system as a whole. In other words, the entire complex network of new dimensions in those relations — closed clubs, informal entities, alliances and others — should be anchored in the United Nations. If that is done, the system we have can function in a coherent, concerted and effective manner.

The new Secretary-General has launched a comprehensive process for reform of the United Nations, and we welcome this undertaking on the whole. We would particularly like to highlight the relevance and importance of his initiatives where the maintenance of international peace and security and the fight against terrorism are concerned. We realize that the degree of success of this transformation will to a large extent determine the role and place of the Organization in the world for many years to come, and we believe that success will come if we all uphold three major principles.

First, reform must be transparent, logical and result-oriented.

Secondly, it should not lead to more red tape or a greater burden on Member States.

Thirdly, reform should be inclusive. Every Member State's voice must be heard. However, the most important part of reform of the United Nations system is not about reviewing the interactions and alignment of its individual bodies or optimizing its personnel and funding. Its most serious, meaningful and far-reaching reform can and must occur in our relationship to the Organization.

Today the General Assembly constitutes a unique deliberative forum that is essential to our recognition of both the fragility and the diversity of our world. We, the Member States, need to regain our sense of ownership of our Organization, which has been somewhat lost. The United Nations is not made up just of its Secretariat and its field missions, programmes and funds. First and foremost, it is about its Member States and their will or lack of it, about dialogue and cooperation or alienation. No ideal composition of the Security Council or perfectly optimized General Assembly agenda will mean anything to the world beyond the East River unless Member States demonstrate a willingness to look for ways to better understand one another and agree more often.

Only in the most minimal way does our routine work in the General Assembly, agreeing on the texts of multiple lengthy resolutions, represent dialogue and an effort to understand our opponents. Our various thematic side events provide a platform for dozens of speakers to present their views, and yet they very rarely try to find an answer to the question of what we must do to better understand one another. How often, during our official meetings and informal consultations, do inconsistent arguments and unanswered questions hang in the air without a response, or simply without being heard? That is why we are absolutely certain that real reform of the United Nations will come only when together we decide to create the necessary conditions — both in terms of organization and setting goals — to use the United Nations as a practical tool for finding ways to resolve contradictions and disputes among Member States without violence or war.

We want both the Secretary-General and Member States to attend to this message. History has shown that every world order or system of international relations is always born out of the intolerable agony brought on by a major war or watershed event. Do we really need another major war or global calamity for our currently rudderless world to achieve some order? I am sure that none of us wants any such scenario.

Belarus has proposed ways to address our fundamental global problems. We fully realize how audacious and unrealistic the idea of forging a renewed architecture for Eurasian-Atlantic cooperation and security may appear to many at this stage. We are willing to admit that our initial ideas about the outlines and, perhaps, the content of this process may be far from perfect. And it is possible that not everyone is ready to embrace Belarus's notion of the importance of closer cooperation among regional integration processes. However, what we do firmly believe is that it is high time that we all came together to act urgently for the sake of peace and prosperity.

I would like to conclude with a fitting quotation from Martin Luther King, Jr., who once said, "Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: 'Too late'." We can still act to make sure that it will not be too late.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): In his first statement at the United Nations in October 1992 (see A/47/PV.24), the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, endorsed the concept of preventive diplomacy, an idea that is now a very high priority for the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly. That concept has been instrumental for Kazakhstan, which for the 25 years of its independent development has shown itself to be a proactive and responsible member of the international community. My country has become a net contributor to peace, security and stability, and economic and social development, not only in our region but far beyond. We have worked diligently to preserve peace and harmony in our multi-ethnic, multi-religious society, while stressing and ensuring the equality and dignity of every citizen. We have achieved that while also creating an efficient economic model. Our economy has grown 20 times over, and major international corporations have established and strengthened their presence in Kazakhstan, investing more than $265 billion. This year the Institute for Management Development ranked Kazakhstan thirty-second in world competitiveness, after a remarkable rise of 15 places, and thirty-fifth on its ease-of-doing-business index, 16 places higher.

Looking forward, Kazakhstan has a clear vision for its future development. We are aiming to become one of the top 30 most competitive economies in the world by 2050, meeting the most advanced global standards in terms of economic performance and transparent governance, especially those of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. A new model of economic growth, Kazakhstan's third modernization, announced by President Nazarbayev in his annual address earlier this year, outlines a path by which our country can achieve those ambitious goals. On the economic front, the third modernization strongly emphasizes Kazakhstan's rapid technological modernization, with a focus on new high-tech industries, information and communication technologies, as well as massive improvements in the business environment, economic productivity, human development and institutional reforms. We have committed resources to streamlining and upgrading our road, rail, airport and pipeline infrastructure and ensured the effective joining of Kazakhstan's national Nurly Zhol programme and China's One Belt, One Road initiative.

This year, with a view to building a more efficient, sustainable and modern system of governance, President Nazarbayev initiated constitutional reform in Kazakhstan. The reform, now well under way, is aimed at a major redistribution of powers among its three branches and at further democratizing the political system as a whole. The key steps are the transfer of some presidential powers to Parliament and the Government, and the strengthening of a genuine system of checks and balances. Those economic and political modernization processes will be accompanied by efforts in our quest to modernize Kazakhstan's national identity and cultural code to create conditions for a new generation of competitive and pragmatic citizens and leaders with a thirst for knowledge, progressive consciousness and an open attitude.

We are pleased to see that the expanded regional partnership among Central Asian States has enhanced our common capability to withstand threats and challenges. With that in mind, during our current membership of the Security Council, we have been focusing on creating a model of a regional zone of peace, security, development and cooperation in Central Asia. We are also striving to further strengthen regional cooperation and integration among the brother nations of Central Asia in such areas as water management, trade and development, transportation and many others. Kazakhstan is focusing in particular on regional cooperation aimed at tackling the disastrous situation of the Aral Sea. The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea is still the only permanent platform for dialogue among Central Asia's Heads of State, and we believe that it could be used to combine our efforts to formulate mid- and long-term strategies for regional development.

The agenda of the General Assembly at its current session focuses on people, encompassing issues of sustainable development and peace and security, and stresses our common responsibility for the future. None of us can ignore the tough realities we see on the ground — the lack of trust and unity, global and regional inequality and injustice, poverty, xenophobia, conflict, terrorism and extremism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. That is why this agenda truly reflects the magnitude of the challenges that the United Nations is facing today

and at the same time underlines the Organization's undiminished importance.

While the United Nations machinery has indeed been subject to criticism and demands for long-awaited reforms aimed at enhancing its preparedness for crises and response capabilities, the Organization remains a beacon of hope for billions of people across the globe, a universal institution that holds a promise of a better, safer and more sustainable life. We believe that the Secretary-General is on the right track in that regard in his efforts to unite Member States in revitalizing the United Nations. We also support the special meeting on United Nations reform convened on 18 September by United States President Donald Trump, which we believe will be a fresh incentive to turn our Organization into an effective and efficient tool that serves the whole of humankind.

Kazakhstan is actively working on establishing and hosting a United Nations regional hub in Almaty for multilateral diplomacy, with a focus on sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, disaster risk-reduction and resilience-building in the region and beyond. The initiative is in line with the Secretary-General's idea of optimizing the service-delivery of the United Nations and increasing the effectiveness of United Nations field missions' activities through proper planning and management.

My country has continued to pursue the concept of a security and development nexus, while reflecting the intrinsic interdependence of peace, security and development. Sustainable development is unimaginable without peace, and vice versa. When our security architecture is eroded, along with regional confrontations and international terrorism it undermines the achievements that we havemade within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and puts our ability to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in jeopardy. Peace is an integral requirement for social, economic and environmental progress.

When we speak of opportunities made possible by global modernization, we must bear in mind the dangers that can prevent all of us from realizing our potential. In our interdependent and connected world, nuclear weapons are no longer an asset, but rather a danger. With moral authority and responsibility based on my nation's bitter experience of hundreds of nuclear tests, my President has stated that eliminating the danger of nuclear weapons is the most urgent task facing humankind in the twenty-first century. That will involve a whole range of important and urgent steps — a complete ban on nuclear testing, the total prohibition of nuclear weapons and the complete and verifiable destruction of nuclear arsenals.

We are deeply concerned about the nuclear tests being conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — the only State in the twenty-first century that has continued with such tests, despite the condemnation of the entire international community. I want to stress that the actions that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is taking to further develop its nuclear and missile programmes are totally unacceptable. Pyongyang must take serious steps to restore our trust and must recommit to a much-needed political settlement.

In 2009, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 64/35, thereby designating 29 August — the day the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was officially closed in 1991 by the decree of President Nazarbayev — as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. That day has been widely commemorated in Kazakhstan and in the United Nations since 2010. This year has also been marked by several events of international significance. From 25 to 29 August, Astana hosted the conference of the Pugwash movement of scientists commemorating the movement's sixtieth anniversary and the International Day against Nuclear Tests, at which hundreds of scholars, practitioners and officials from some 50 countries gathered to seek ways to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

On that same day, my President and Director General Yukiya Amano, of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), opened the IAEA Low-Enriched Uranium Bank facility in Kazakhstan, with a view to making a significant contribution to the uses of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and strengthening the global non-proliferation regime. At the opening ceremony, President Nazarbayev outlined a number of important initiatives that I would like to share with the Assembly.

The first will be to convene a summit of all the States that possess nuclear weapons to collectively discuss further steps towards their nuclear disarmament and the attainment of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The second is to enhance the role of nuclear-weapon-free zones as effective instruments for ending further

nuclear proliferation and to combine the efforts of States members of such zones at a meeting in our capital of Astana of representatives of all the nuclear-weapon-free zones. The third is to revive the global nuclear-security summit process and to host the first relaunched nuclear-security summit, also in Astana. The fourth is to call for joint efforts to ensure that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is implemented by 2020, which will be the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty's entry into force.

We must improve the coordination of our common response to the barbaric acts of terrorists. Kazakhstan fully supports the efforts of the United Nations in that regard, especially the creation of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, with a view to developing a comprehensive long-term approach. That is in line with the President of Kazakhstan's 2015 proposal for the joint establishment of a global anti-terrorism coalition. My country looks forward to actively and constructively participating in the first-ever meeting of the heads of national counter-terrorism agencies next year with a view to forging a new international counter-terrorism partnership. As a practical contribution to the global partnership in the fight against terrorism, my country has begun to formulate a code of conduct for the achievement of a terrorism-free world as one way to expedite work on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. We are also committed to implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and have recently allocated $300,000 for its implementation in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan advocates for the broadest possible implementation of multilateral mechanisms and instruments for combating foreign terrorist fighters and shutting down the channels of financial support for their activities through the illegal trade in drugs, natural resources and cultural artefacts. Since there is a wide range of approaches to the issue of controlling Internet content, we believe that the United Nations should take concerted action to prevent the use of the Internet for recruiting and spreading terrorist ideology and radicalizing populations, especially young people. We in Kazakhstan are working on creating a national cybershield system.

The unspeakable suffering of millions of people in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, and the ongoing humanitarian crises and gross violations of human rights in those countries, leave none of us indifferent. Kazakhstan is hosting the Astana process on Syria in order to contribute to the peaceful settlement of the situation there and to promote the United Nations-led negotiations in Geneva, which is the primary forum for those negotiations. We believe that the Astana process, which began earlier this year with the support and direct involvement of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, has produced clear, positive results aimed at strengthening the ceasefire regime, creating de-escalation zones and developing a monitoring mechanism. Success in the Geneva and Astana platforms is critical and should be supported by all if we are to save innocent lives in Syria. It is a moral imperative for all of us.

Kazakhstan has a clear and consistent position on the Middle East peace process, based on a two-State solution approach. We support a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side in peace with Israel.

As an active member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), my country, along with other OIC member States, is a firm defender of the ideal of dialogue among nations and peoples of diverse religious identity. In Astana we recently hosted the OIC Summit on Science and Technology on the margins of the International Exhibition Expo 2017. While the Summit was devoted to science and technology matters, the participants were not in a position to ignore the current suffering of the Rohingya community. The OIC member States condemned those continued violations and called for dialogue among the United Nations, the OIC and the Government of Myanmar to stop the humanitarian crisis. Those events have once again highlighted the relevance of our initiative in establishing the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

Kazakhstan is fully committed to strengthening and improving United Nations peacekeeping activities. We believe that the Secretary-General's new approach to peacekeeping reform, with a cross-pillar approach focusing on prevention and sustaining peace, will improve the effectiveness and accountability of peacekeeping operations. We are confident that, if we ensure flexibility and partnerships, they will not only encourage the active involvement and engagement of new countries but could also increase the effectiveness of peace operations. My country is committed to increasing its contribution to United Nations peacekeeping by sending more military observers and staff officers to United Nations missions. We recently declared that we had reached the second level

of peacekeeping-unit preparedness for deployment to United Nations peacekeeping missions in the United Nations Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System.

Earlier this year I presented President Nazarbayev's policy address to the Security Council. Its seven priorities call for ensuring humankind's survival through a world free of nuclear weapons by 2045 and through the prevention and elimination of military confrontation at the regional and global levels, thereby generating a model for a regional zone of peace, security, cooperation and development in Central Asia. It calls for all stakeholders to work globally to combat international terrorism and extremism, promote peace and security in Africa, implement the SDGs and work for reform of the Security Council and the United Nations system.

Kazakhstan will hold the presidency of the Council for the month of January 2018. The major event we are planning during that period will be a high-level open debate on global peace and security. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our invitation to all Member States to participate in the debate at the highest level. Our presidency will focus particularly on security and stability in Afghanistan and Central Asia through the prism of Afghanistan's peaceful integration, economically and politically, into regional and global processes.

My country remains deeply committed to sustainable development. In the face of the reality of climate change, Kazakhstan, despite its abundant conventional energy resources, is committed to achieving a green economy by diversifying and developing alternative energy sources. That led us to choose "Future energy" as the theme for the Astana Expo 2017 international exhibition. Throughout the summer, 115 countries and 22 international organizations, including the United Nations, its funds, agencies and programmes, showcased their creative experiences. That enormous undertaking is clear evidence of Kazakhstan's pledge to carry forward the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. One of the best ways to promote a green economy and green business is the use of the legacy of the Expo infrastructure. With the support of five United Nations agencies, we are establishing a "Future energy" international centre for the development of green technologies and investment projects. Its activities will be in full compliance with Kazakhstan's Green Bridge Partnership Programme, as reflected in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The Expo infrastructure will also house an Astana international financial centre and a centre for information-technology start-ups. We invite all Member States to participate in their activities.

As I mentioned earlier, we hosted the first-ever OIC Summit on Science and Technology within the framework of the Expo, an event that underlined the importance of technological modernization in achieving unity and solidarity in the 1.5-billion-strong Islamic world. The high-level meeting, which was attended by 15 presidents and dignitaries from 57 States, emphasized the clear and undeniable link between security and development and recognized that building a sustainable future for our nations is the only way to end challenges and threats to their security. In support of the OIC's endeavours, the President of Kazakhstan proposed creating a 15-member OIC forum, similar to the Group of 20, designed to streamline our scientific and economic cooperation. He invited Islamic nations to jointly develop the Expo legacy in the areas of Islamic finance and green technologies, and established a prize for Islamic science and innovations.

In conclusion, I would like to stress how vital it is that we preserve peace and stability and ensure the gradual and sustainable development of our fragile world. We do not have the luxury of being able to make mistakes and then going back to correct them. We call on all world leaders to redouble their efforts and their goodwill with the goal of making progress towards lasting peace and prosperity for all.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alfonso Maria Dastis Quecedo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. Dastis Quecedo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in that important role. The seventy-second session is also the first of Secretary-General António Guterres's term, and he can count on Spain's unwavering support in carrying out his work.

Spain wants to redouble its efforts to achieve a fairer, freer and more united world. That reaffirmation of our commitment makes particular sense in the wake of the ruthless terrorist attacks that struck the cities of Barcelona and Cambrils on 17 August. From this rostrum, I want to express the sincere gratitude of the

Spanish people for the many heartfelt expressions of solidarity and affection that we have received from all over the world. Terrorism will be defeated with unity, perseverance and the full force of the law.

Spain is a free and open society. Our rights and freedoms are protected by the social and democratic rule of law enshrined in our Constitution. The Spanish Government cannot, and will not, cease to defend the rule of law and the values it inspires — freedom, equality, justice and political pluralism. Spain's public authorities have the duty to ensure the rights and freedoms of all Spaniards. Any challenge to the principles of democracy represents a serious attack on our peaceful and free coexistence. Pitting any alleged legitimate claim against the rule of law of the Constitution will inevitably result in the violation of the fundamental rights of millions of citizens and is incompatible with democracy.

In the same conviction and determination with which we defend a constitutional and democratic Spain, we reaffirm the values, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. As His Majesty King Don Felipe VI indicated from this rostrum a year ago, the Charter

> "was not simply a beacon that lit the dark times of the past, but ... also illuminates our present and our future." (*A/71/PV.10, p. 6*)

Spain undertook its Security Council mandate during the 2015-2016 biennium with a sense of responsibility. We made significant contributions in the areas of non-proliferation, counter-terrorism and support for its victims, preventive diplomacy, the humanitarian agenda and increasing the transparency of the Council's work. We will bring the same attitude to our service on the Human Rights Council for the 2018-2020 triennium, if on 16 October the members of the Assembly entrust us with that responsibility. The defence and promotion of human rights is a priority of Spain's foreign policy.

Today's world is highly interdependent. Extreme poverty, hunger, desertification, global warming and the preservation of forests and oceans are serious and urgent challenges that require concerted action. Spain affirms its full commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which inspires our policies. We are preparing for a voluntary review of our implementation of the 2030 Agenda in July 2018. It requires us to make tremendous collective efforts to ensure that no one is left behind. We must work to combat inequality, foster prosperity and provide job opportunities to young people on a planet that must remain habitable for generations to come. The future livability of large areas of the planet is inextricably linked to fulfilment of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, and we must act accordingly.

Large displacements of people have reached unprecedented levels in recent years. The two global compacts on refugees and migrants that we have committed to adopting in 2018 should confirm our desire to provide a concerted, equitable and humane response to the problem of refugees and contribute to managing migrant flows among their countries of origin, transit and destination. Both issues deserve to be treated individually.

Regrettably, the scourge of war and threats to peace persist in many parts of the world. We have been talking here about the conflict in Syria for seven years. We are heartened by the decrease in hostilities and by the victories against Da'esh, but we remain concerned about how specific interests are put ahead of a political solution that, with United Nations mediation, could lead to a genuine transition. The United Nations also has a central role in promoting a political agreement in Yemen that would end the most serious humanitarian crisis in the world today.

Turning to Iraq, the Government has successfully reclaimed Mosul and other territories from the horror of Da'esh. Spain would like to help the new Iraq by, inter alia, assisting with the training of its security forces. We support the reconstruction of the country and reconciliation among its citizens, and we reject political undertakings that detract from key efforts to consolidate a free, democratic and united Iraq.

In Lebanon, we welcome the recent renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, an operation in which Spain's armed forces play a substantive part.

We count on the rigorous implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, which will contribute to nuclear non-proliferation and peace in the region.

On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the parties must return to the spirit of Madrid and to the negotiating table. The status quo is not sustainable. We are concerned about the trends we see on the ground that

are inconsistent with the two-State solution. Only two democratic States, living side by side within secure and recognized borders, will meet the legitimate expectations of Israelis and Palestinians.

Spain has always accorded priority to the Mediterranean, which we have sought to transform into an area of peace and prosperity. To that end, it is vital to encourage greater cooperation, such as that promoted by the Union for the Mediterranean.

Peace and prosperity in the Maghreb are of prime importance to Spain. My country welcomes the Secretary-General's intention to resume talks between the parties to the Western Sahara dispute. We are confident that his new Personal Envoy will facilitate progress towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that offers self-determination to the people of Western Sahara, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The new Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Libya has Spain's full support in his efforts to find a political solution based on a united country and in accordance with the Libyan Political Agreement.

Spain pays special and preferential attention to the African continent. Africa needs peace, stability, economic growth and sound institutions. We firmly believe in its potential, which will be compounded when conflicts cease, peace has been consolidated and social cohesion deepens.

Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia are two recent success stories that should set the tone for the other conflicts that continue to affect the continent. We reiterate our belief that the solution to those conflicts will depend upon fully understanding them and working together to find solutions to achieve inclusive development.

We remain deeply concerned about the situation in Mali, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. I would like to pay tribute to the Blue Helmets who lost their lives in those countries and in other United Nations missions. Spain has established strong links with the countries of the Sahel. We want them to view Spain as a close and supportive country, on which they can depend upon to combat terrorism and humanitarian crises, such as the crisis affecting the Lake Chad basin region.

We are following with concern the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call for respect for constitutional provisions, and dialogue in the quest for agreements on which coexistence is based. Similarly, we call on the Burundian authorities to act responsibly and with respect for constitutional legality.

The international community has invested considerable resources in support of Afghanistan since 2001 and, in the past year, has reiterated its commitment to the country. Spain believes that it is essential to safeguard the promise of an Afghan society that is free of extremism and terrorism and respectful of human rights, including the rights of women and children.

The nuclear and ballistic proliferation programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are one of the main threats to international peace. The resumption of tests is a blatant challenge to Security Council resolutions and seriously undermines the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, to which Spain is firmly committed. We reiterate our call to the authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon a path that leads inexorably to the country's political and economic isolation and to genuinely opt for substantive negotiations for the complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Latin America and the Caribbean are undergoing profound changes to their institutions and are seeking new integration mechanisms. In that regard, we consider that the Pacific Alliance is a successful model of political and economic cooperation and that its dialogue with the Southern Common Market will lead to a promising future for the region.

Spain welcomes the peace agreement reached in Colombia. We would like to contribute actively to the consolidation of that peace. We participated in the United Nations Mission in Colombia to oversee the laying down of weapons. We welcome the progress made in that process, and we are open to taking part in the new United Nations Verification Mission, which, from 26 September, will be tasked with verifying the reintegration of the contingents of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. In addition, we also support the consolidation of the peace process with development actions taken at the bilateral, European and multilateral levels. We also welcome the prospects for the cessation of hostilities with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, and we offer our assistance in that endeavour.

Spain also has fraternal ties to Venezuela. We therefore fervently hope that Venezuelans can once again live in democracy, peace and freedom. We urge

the Government, within the framework of ongoing regional efforts, to engage in genuine dialogue with the opposition, respectful of the constitutional framework, the separation and integrity of powers and of human rights. That dialogue should lead to the release of all political prisoners, the holding of free and transparent elections and the end of the humanitarian crisis. That will restore a voice to the Venezuelan people. My country will spare no effort to make that possible.

Spain supports the difficult but necessary work of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) to strengthen the rule of law in the country. It encourages continued cooperation between the Guatemalan authorities and CICIG. We hope that the recent misunderstandings between the two entities can be overcome through dialogue and understanding. CICIG is an important instrument for supporting Guatemala in its quest for governance, the proper functioning of its institutions, prosperity, and the well-being of the Guatemalan people and their contribution to Central American integration.

The development and stabilization of Haiti are also a major objective for Spain. My country has participated in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti since its inception. We will continue to support the work of the United Nations in the new phase initiated by Security Council resolution 2350 (2017).

The rule of law at the international level cannot allow the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity of States to be violated. The annexation of Crimea is a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and is an outright breach of international law. It is regrettable that such an event occurred in twenty-first century Europe. We are also concerned about the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, whose resolution requires compliance with the Minsk agreements. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine deserves our full support.

The European Union is one of the most admirable legal and political structures to have emerged since the Second World War. It has brought about unprecedented peace and prosperity in Europe. The United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union saddens us, but we will work to conclude the negotiations on the new relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union with an agreement that preserves the close and fruitful links between them.

In the context of Brexit, Spain has made a generous proposal to resolve the Gibraltar issue. It combines the unwavering claim of Spanish sovereignty over the colony with a statute that benefits the Rock's inhabitants, so that they may continue to enjoy the advantages of European Union membership. We invite the United Kingdom to negotiate an agreement based on those premises, putting an end to an anachronism that is completely outlandish given the excellent relationship between our two countries. We must not allow more time to pass without fulfilling the United Nations mandate calling on us to negotiate the Gibraltar issue.

The Hispano-Roman philosopher Seneca wrote,

> "It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult."

We have no choice but to dare to face, together and with determination, the problems that afflict us. With commitment, perseverance and humility we can make great progress. The road is long and does not allow for delays. Let us make the fulfilment of the San Francisco Charter's aspirations for peace, sustainable development and human rights the imperative goal that guides our work during this session.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Minister of Immigration and Asylum of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Minister Miroslav Lajčák, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. You are a long-standing friend, and I know that you will be able to successfully carry out the task entrusted to you.

My thoughts today are especially with the United States, Mexico and the Caribbean, which have been repeatedly struck by misfortune. My country is doing everything in its power to assist them in those humanitarian emergencies.

My message is simple. In a context where crisis hotbeds are proliferating and tensions are increasing, it is multilateralism that must prevail, meaning cooperation, dialogue and seeking solutions within the multilateral framework. More than ever, multilateralism and cooperation must take precedence over unilateral

approaches and national selfishness, in the interests of our common good and our common humanity.

When facing crises, the world expects a lot from the United Nations. The appointment of our new Secretary-General, António Guterres, through an unprecedented process characterized by greater transparency, grants him new legitimacy that he can put to the service of his work and that of the Organization itself. It also allows him to initiate three major reform projects — as he has indicated, with regard to the management of the Secretariat, the reorganization of the peace and security pillar and the repositioning of the United Nations development system. A rationalization of the latter, both at Headquarters and in the field, is of particular interest to my country, as 30 per cent of our official development assistance is channelled through multilateral organizations.

Reform efforts must be borne on all fronts and all aspects of our Organization. In that regard, progress is still to be made on the part of the Security Council. It must become more transparent, even though efforts have been made in that area. It must become more representative of today's world. It is also worth remembering that Security Council membership carries obligations as well as rights. We regret that in the past 12 months we have seen abusive use of the right of the veto. Luxembourg was one of the first to advocate the code of conduct for the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group to prevent crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. We also strongly support the French-Mexican initiative, whereby relevant States give up their right to the veto in the event of mass atrocity.

For the United Nations to be able to implement an ambitious agenda, it must have sufficient resources. However, the budgetary situation of the United Nations remains difficult, notably, but not solely, because of the new approach by the American Administration. That may prevent agencies from fulfilling their core mission. Clearly, we need to go back to the drawing board. My country supports the idea of a budgetary compact for development.

Luxembourg contributes 1 per cent of its gross national income to official development assistance. Our annual voluntary contributions to the various agencies is in excess of $35 million for 2017. The funding requirements for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are enormous. Progress has been made in terms of funding to combat climate change. To take the case of Luxembourg, my country has set up a green stock exchange with a current capitalization of more than €57 billion. We plan to use that model to set up future instruments for sustainable development financing on the basis of a broader range of development goals.

At the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July, Luxembourg presented its voluntary national review for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The preparation of that review enriched the debate in my country, enabling us to mobilize efforts and strengthen ownership among all stakeholders of the 2030 Agenda. Those efforts will translate into the adoption of a new sustainable development plan that will guide the work of the public authorities and that of civil society and private-sector actors in the decade ahead.

My country acts with conviction within both a European and a multilateral framework. The context of globalization means that there is no other choice. That is true in the area of trade, even though bilateral regional agreements may complement that framework. That is also true in a whole series of other areas, above all in the fight against climate change. We are fully committed to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and we regret that one of the major international actors has distanced itself from that instrument. We hope that it will be possible to bring that actor back, as it is true that a truly global framework would not be complete without it. I would also like to point out my country's support for the French initiative of a global pact for the environment, which will be able to provide a political framework in the future, giving coherence to all existing instruments.

If there is one phenomenon that is more a product of globalization than any other, it is population movements. There are multiple reasons for that, such as demographic pressure, climate change, conflict and humanitarian disasters. Understandable economic motives, both in countries of origin and in countries of destination, are also often the basis for such movements. In any case, that is a problem that needs to be addressed, and it is very useful that it should be dealt with at the level of our Organization. Next year will see the establishment of new instruments with regard to both refugees and migration. The dividing line between the two will not always be easy to draw.

With regard to migration, the current phase has allowed us to take stock of the situation, which does not always correspond to preconceived notions. First, there is the fact that most of the major transregional movements today are South-South movements. Secondly, there is the fact that, depending on the circumstances, many countries are simultaneously countries of origin, countries of transit and host countries. It is therefore an issue that goes beyond a single North-South logic, although I do not deny the difficulties and concerns arising from the European refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016. Many refugees were forced to move either due to legitimate concerns for their physical safety or humanitarian disasters arising from conflicts.

In that regard, the situation in the Middle East continues to raise concerns. Beyond the persistent obstacles to seeking a political solution between Israel and Palestine, the situations in Syria and Yemen are apocalyptic, Libya is engulfed by violence and civil war, and new tensions are emerging in the Gulf countries. The international community must do everything in its power to reduce those tensions.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has lost none of its core importance. The total absence of credible political prospects could lead at any moment to a new eruption of violence and creates fertile ground for hatred and terrorism. Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), adopted on 23 December 2016, which again calls on Israel to immediately and completely cease all its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, is not directed against Israel. The resolution targets a status quo that has become untenable and unacceptable. It aims to contribute to ensuring peace for Israel.

The recent announcement of general elections being organized in Palestine offers a slight hope for reconciliation. We must seize that opportunity, which also, clearly, requires responsibility on the part of Palestinian leaders, and I have trust in President Abbas in that regard. By continuing settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Israeli Government is directly jeopardizing the two-State solution, the only fair and equitable way to make possible a lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this fiftieth year of Israeli occupation, the trend on the ground is very worrying. But that is not a reason to give up. On the contrary, the international community must mobilize to change the situation.

In Syria, all stakeholders must realize that peace will return only if a comprehensive, genuine, inclusive political transition is implemented. In this seventh year of the conflict, a lasting political solution depends upon the commitment of countries that can exert political, military or economic influence on the warring parties in Syria. Every effort must be made to ensure that negotiations in Geneva under the United Nations continue and make progress. The Astana process alone is not enough. We should improve humanitarian access and extend the de-escalation zones and local ceasefires, which remain a glimmer of hope for a ravaged population.

In Iraq, it was announced that a referendum would be held on 25 September 2018 in the Kurdistan region. Our position is to support the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. A united, stable and democratic Iraq should guarantee the interests of all citizens. The federal Government and the Kurdish Regional Government established excellent cooperation during the horrible military campaign against Da'esh. The differences that remain between them must be resolved through a peaceful and constructive dialogue that leads to an agreed solution in the framework of the Iraqi Constitution.

We have to do everything we can to calm the situation in the region. It also means maintaining and rigorously implementing the Iran nuclear deal, which helps to reduce the risk of proliferation. The agreement was signed not only bilaterally between the United States and Iran, but also by the European Union, Russia, China, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, as well as being endorsed by Security Council resolution 2231 (2015).

That is also important in the context of the North Korean regime's headlong rush, which is multiplying provocations by accelerating its nuclear and ballistic programme through nuclear tests and missile launches. That is unacceptable and, like many other countries, Luxembourg strongly condemns those acts by Pyongyang. The Security Council has just strengthened the sanctions regime, and the European Union will do the same. Only the determination and the resolve of the international community will bring the regime back to reason, and hopefully to the negotiation table. If we call for resolve, we must also avoid an escalation that would lead to a catastrophe. To reach true de-escalation, we must not close the door to diplomacy and dialogue. The Iran agreement can serve as an inspiration in that

regard. It demonstrates that an appropriate policy, combining pressure and dialogue, can lead to results.

Africa continues to mobilize the energies of international actors in the areas of development, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, conflict prevention and combating terrorism. The political and humanitarian situations in South Sudan, around Lake Chad, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are extremely worrying. As in the case of the Sahel and Mali, such situations are often the result of non-State actors, which render a number of mechanisms inoperative.

Luxembourg is committed to the activities of its African partners, including at the regional level. We will therefore support the deployment of the Force conjointe du G5 Sahel.

In that context, it is also essential to develop the various instruments of international criminal justice. We must continue to support the International Criminal Court (ICC), whose scope should be extended. I would like to say here how pleased we are that the trend towards disengagement by African States has been halted. Clearly, the scope of the ICC is not confined to Africa, and any such perception should be avoided.

We have supported the international, impartial and independent inquiry mechanism on the most serious crimes committed in Syria since March 2011. We call upon all Member States to participate in financing the mechanism before it can be incorporated into the United Nations regular budget. We also support initiatives on the responsibility of Da'esh for the crimes committed in Iraq, as endorsed today by the Security Council (see S/PV.8052).

The current session of the General Assembly focuses on people and their right to peace and a decent life. Human rights and the dignity of the human being must guide all our actions. All of the situations I have just mentioned give rise to human rights violations. In a cruel irony, those violations are sometimes also committed by those who were least expected to do so. I congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres for having referred the extreme deterioration of the situation of the ethnic and religious minority in Myanmar — the Rohingya minority — to the Security Council. The Burmese authorities must cease military operations and ensure humanitarian access. Ethnic cleansing has no place in the twenty-first century, not in Myanmar or anywhere else.

Human trafficking, sexual exploitation in conflict situations and violations of the rights of children in armed conflict situations are all scourges that are unfortunately still raging. We must not be content with denouncing them, but ensure that we support and strengthen our financial and human resources, including the institutions that counter those scourges.

The right to dignity is also reflected in respect for the physical integrity of women and girls. In recent decades, we have been able to reduce maternal mortality by almost half, but access by women and girls to sexual and reproductive rights in health care is now being challenged in some parts of the world. Every day, more than 800 women and adolescent girls die from pregnancy-related causes. More than 22 million unsafe abortions are recorded each year. Those statistics are horrifying. That is why Luxembourg, alongside our partners such as Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands, has joined the SheDecides initiative by providing €2 million in additional funding this year to support the United Nations Population Fund. Women's health is one of the top priorities of Luxembourg's health strategy and cooperation. I assure the Assembly that my country will continue to support the access of girls and women to sexual and reproductive rights and health.

Sometimes defending human rights is reduced to its simplest expression — no more or less than ensuring the physical survival of the population. I mentioned catastrophic humanitarian situations in several countries. Luxembourg responded to the United Nations appeal to the famine crisis in three African countries and Yemen. For those four countries — Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen — my country has pledged more than €10 million in 2017. We are also a signatory to the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing, which gives more flexibility, predictability and continuity to international humanitarian efforts.

I mentioned our Organization and the world. Let me say a few words about Europe. Europe is not immune to the tensions in the international order, or should I say, international disorder? In Ukraine, the past year was marked by renewed hostilities, with numerous violations of the ceasefire, despite the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Trilateral Contact Group. I hope that the Normandy format talks can continue and lead the parties to fully implement the Minsk agreements in

order to guarantee the territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity of Ukraine.

Europe is not immune to the upheavals of globalization, either. It is victim to repeated acts of pointless and indiscriminate acts of terrorism. It is also a place where nationalist movements are fuelled by an anti-immigrant or anti-refugee backlashes. Moreover, sharing the burden of taking in refugees has been far from exemplary in some communities, but also in some States, including European Union member States. And yet, while they were capable of adding momentum to the worst fears a year ago, populist movements are on the decline in Europe, even if they are often an electoral reality. The taking in of hundreds of thousands of refugees occurs year in year out, and there is renewed optimism, including prospects for economic growth. I call for a Europe that rejects withdrawal into isolation, a Europe free of conflict that does not give way to intimidation, not even in its own neighbourhood, a Europe that puts the person at the centre of its efforts and which is resolutely committed to the multilateral system.

The tensions in the international system are the result of major trends such as growing inequality, migratory flows and climate change. They pit two visions against each other — one based on force, the law of the jungle, unilateralism and national selfishness, even nationalism; the other on the primacy of multilateralism, solidarity, universal values, human rights and the rule of law. Luxembourg is committed to the latter vision. The challenges I have outlined need to be tackled in a multilateral system with strong institutions — a multilateral system inspired by the Charter of the United Nations, which enshrines human dignity and the sovereign equality of all States. That is the best recourse for the vast majority of the States of the international community and for the peoples of the United Nations, which we represent here. At its heart, multilateralism is the foundation of the United Nations. To challenge it would be to question the inspiration behind the United Nations — the creation of an international order based on the rule of law, in the service of peace and freedom.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Ulla Tørnæs, Minister for Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Ms. Tørnæs (Denmark): This session of the General Assembly opens during a period of unprecedented change. Threats and challenges such as poverty, terrorism, climate change, violations of human rights, gender inequality, armed conflict, displacement and irregular migration are ever more interconnected. Our responses to those challenges must reflect their complexity. Our responses will require better and deeper cooperation, and must involve more stakeholders, new solutions and more effective international institutions.

The evolving global landscape gives us an opportunity to renew and redefine how we work together. The United Nations must seize this opportunity. Denmark congratulates Mr. António Guterres on the successful beginning of his term as Secretary-General. He can count on Denmark's full support in his efforts. More than ever, we need leadership and common purpose to steer the Organization in a new direction. Staying on the current path is not an option if we want to maintain the legitimacy of the United Nations. Fundamental and ambitious reform is the only way forward. This week, the Secretary-General laid out a strong vision for a reformed United Nations and a call for action to all — from Governments to the staff of this great Organization, to our partners outside this building. We must all invest in, and commit to, that agenda for change. As Member States, we have a responsibility to find common solutions that will turn our shared goals into positive change and protect the principles and values of the United Nations.

That spirit must also guide our work in the years to come. Denmark is committed to international cooperation through the United Nations, built on shared values, the rule of law and human rights. That is one of the reasons that Denmark is running for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the term 2019-2021. Denmark has never before been a member of the Human Rights Council. As a longstanding supporter of the United Nations and a consistent advocate for the protection of the dignity and rights of all people, we believe that we could make a significant contribution in the Council, based on a commitment to promote dignity, dialogue and development.

Denmark is committed to an ambitious follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, at home and abroad. We have provided at least 0.7 per cent of our gross national income in official development assistance for the past 40 years and will continue to do so in future. We call on all developed countries to meet the 0.7 per cent target. With only 13 years left to achieve

the Sustainable Development Goals, we have no time to waste when it comes to fundamentally rethinking the United Nations Development System and its support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Secretary-General has presented a set of clear reform proposals. Now we must come together and support their implementation. This is not a donor-versus-developing-country scenario, or a North-versus-South debate. Let us support the Secretary-General's plan because we agree that we all have an interest in a United Nations that is cost-effective and can arrive at coherent and sustainable solutions on the ground. Citizens around the world expect nothing less. We need to break with the status quo, particularly in four priority areas.

First, a reformed United Nations development system must deliver on the promise of unified country-level engagements where silo-thinking, competition for resources and fragmented support strategies become a thing of the past.

Secondly, in our response to the many complex crises around the world, we need to build a stronger bridge between immediate relief and long-term development objectives. Our support for United Nations humanitarian work is as strong as ever. Denmark is one of the world's largest humanitarian donors, and in our 2018 aid budget we will allocate more funds to humanitarian action than ever before. We are fully behind the Secretary-General's call for a new way of working in responding to protracted humanitarian crises and displacement. We must meet the needs of those affected, while also giving hope for a better future. The new way of working is about much stronger cooperation and coordination among partners in and outside the United Nations system, and Denmark will continue to play a leading role in advancing that agenda.

Thirdly, the United Nations development system needs to be built on the basic premise that neither the United Nations nor Governments have the capacity or resources to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Partnering with the private sector, civil society, academia and innovators will be crucial. The United Nations must rethink how it incorporates those resources on our way towards meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Denmark is taking the lead to support strong and meaningful principle-based partnerships. Together with our strategic partners — Chile, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mexico, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam — the Danish Government launched a new initiative this week in support of the 2030 Agenda, entitled Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030. The initiative brings together Governments, companies, cities, think tanks and investors to establish and boost public-private partnerships for a greener tomorrow. Through the initiative, we will leverage partnerships that will help us take better care of our planet.

Fourthly, Denmark welcomes the Secretary-General's strong commitment to gender equality in our reform efforts. Women and girls all over the world must be empowered to contribute to stronger communities and societies. Ensuring equal opportunities for women is absolutely crucial for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. In the Danish Government's view, gender equality is first and foremost a question of dignity and ensuring the human rights of all women and girls, including safeguarding sexual and reproductive health and rights. That is fundamentally about the right to decide over one's own body. As one of the founding members of the SheDecides movement, Denmark is committed to continuing to push for progress and protect the rights of all women and girls around the world. Just recently, Denmark announced a major increase in its contribution to the United Nations Population Fund. Too many young people today face a lack of opportunities and poverty. We have the largest youth population in history, and Denmark is committed to helping youth acquire the means and skills required to be drivers of development.

If we want to ensure a more stable and peaceful future, Member States must adhere to international law and common rules for coexistence and cooperation. Regrettably, we continue to see Member States that put national interests before respect for the dignity and rights of their citizens, or ignore the legitimate concerns of their neighbours, as well as regional and global stability. The nuclear and missile tests conducted by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea constitute a blatant disregard of our collective security, non-proliferation norms and rules, and the continued demands by the Security Council. Denmark strongly condemns that irresponsible behaviour and calls on the regime in Pyongyang to de-escalate the current situation and commit to a peaceful solution in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The recent outbreak of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state is deeply concerning. Denmark calls on the Government of Myanmar to facilitate humanitarian

assistance to all those in need and commit to aiding the safe return of civilians fleeing from the conflict. We welcome the Government's commitment to implement without delay the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The violence must stop, and the security forces must ensure the protection of civilians. We condemn the attacks on security forces and the subsequent serious human rights violations. We applaud the Government of Bangladesh for providing protection to civilians fleeing across the border. Denmark stands ready to assist both Myanmar and Bangladesh in pursuing integrated humanitarian and development solutions for the affected areas.

Denmark stands in solidarity with all those affected by terrorism and violent extremism. We continue to be an active participant in combating those threats to our societies, including through our military and civilian contributions to the Global Coalition against Da'esh in Iraq and Syria. We are also a key partner in other conflict areas, such as Afghanistan, Mali, the Sahel and Somalia. To defeat terrorism, we need to supplement our military effort with broad-based engagements that also focus on cutting off terrorist financing and repelling extremist propaganda online and offline, as well as stabilizing areas liberated from Da'esh and building peace in conflict-affected countries.

The United Nations plays a central role when it comes to stabilizing war-torn countries and building lasting peace, but comprehensive reforms are needed. Denmark welcomes the vision of the Secretary-General for the peace and security architecture of the United Nations with a streamlined, coordinated and effective response in the field. As Member States, we have an obligation with respect to, and a shared interest in, supporting those critical reforms so that the United Nations can fulfil its purpose and its promise to the world. The time for bold ambitions is now.

If we do not support reforms and deny generations' hope and opportunity for a more prosperous future, we will continue to witness international turmoil and unprecedented levels of displacement. We will continue to witness people forced to leave their homes and venture out on dangerous journeys. And we will continue to witness many people falling into the hands of relentless smugglers and traffickers.

Denmark contributes significantly to helping displaced populations and others in emergency situations live dignified lives. Last year, Denmark contributed more than $80 million to the Syrian crisis alone. Our programmes focus on helping refugees in their regions of origin, which enables us to use our funds more efficiently and ultimately help more people.

Unmanaged migration poses a significant global challenge. We need to strengthen our cooperation and commitment to existing international legal frameworks. In that regard, Denmark welcomes the dialogue taking place in preparation for the global compact on migration.

Through leadership and a renewed commitment to a reformed United Nations, innovation and willingness to challenge old ways of thinking, strong partnerships across the public-private spectrum, across age and gender divides and across different organizations and institutions, the opportunity to create a new path for our United Nations is here.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now give the floor to those speakers who have asked to exercise the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Pavlichenko (Ukraine): I take the floor to exercise Ukraine's right of reply with regard to the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation earlier today (see A/72/PV.12). Due to the lateness of the hour, I will be very brief. After all, the last thing that the General Assembly needs is to put the aggressor out of its misery by engaging with it.

That is why I will limit myself to just one simple fact, namely, that Russia has been recognized by the United Nations — by the General Assembly, the most representative organ of the Organization — loud and clear as an occupying Power in Ukraine, and by extension as a side to the conflict. What does that mean? It means that, as an occupying Power and side to the conflict, it has neither a legal nor a moral right to pronounce itself over Ukraine in this Hall, at least not until Russia returns Crimea to Ukraine, withdraws from the Donbas region and pays in full for its aggression.

Ms. Gambhir (India): I take the floor to exercise India's right of reply in response to Pakistan's defence of terrorism. It is extraordinary that the State that protected Osama Bin Laden and sheltered Mullah

Omar should have the gumption to play the victim. By now, all of Pakistan's neighbours are painfully familiar with its tactics of creating narratives that are based on distortion, deception and deceit. The General Assembly, and the world beyond, knows that efforts at creating alternative facts do not change reality.

In its short history, Pakistan has become a geography synonymous with terror. The quest for a land of the pure has actually produced a land of pure terror. Pakistan is now terrorist-stan, with a flourishing industry that produces and exports global terrorism. Its current state can be attributed to the fact that Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, a leader of a United Nations-designated terrorist organization, Lashkar-e-Taiba, is now sought to be legitimized as a leader of a political party. It is a country with a counter-terrorism policy that mainstreams and upstreams terrorists, by either providing safe havens to global terror leaders in its military towns or protecting them with political careers. None of that can justify Pakistan's avaricious efforts in coveting the territories of its neighbours. Insofar as India is concerned, Pakistan must understand that the state of Jammu and Kashmir is, and will always remain, an integral part of India. However much it scales up cross-border terrorism, it will never succeed in undermining India's territorial integrity.

We also heard the delegation of Pakistan complain about the consequences of its supposed counter-terrorism efforts. Having diverted billions of dollars in international military and development aid towards creating a dangerous infrastructure of terror on its own territory, Pakistan is now speaking of the high cost of its terror industry. The polluter, in this case, is paying the price.

Even as terrorists thrive in Pakistan and roam its streets with impunity, we have heard it lecture about the protection of human rights in India. The world does not need lessons on democracy and human rights from a country whose own situation is charitably described as a failed State.

Terrorist-stan is in fact a territory whose contribution to the globalization of terror is unparalleled. Pakistan can only be counselled to abandon a destructive world view that has caused grief to the entire world. If it could be persuaded to demonstrate any commitment to civilization, order and peace, it might still find some acceptance in the comity of nations.

Mr. Salarzai (Afghanistan): My delegation exercises its right of reply owing to one Member State's erroneous claim regarding the presence of safe havens and sanctuaries in Afghanistan. That reference is a deliberate attempt by the Government of Pakistan to divert international attention away from Pakistan's longstanding failure to take effective action against various terrorist groups and sanctuaries on its territory. It remains evidently clear to the global community that the propagation of terrorist activities by State and non-State actors in neighbouring Pakistan constitutes the main source of insecurity in our country, Afghanistan, and the region.

Afghanistan has persistently and consistently sought to address that outstanding issue through various channels, including bilateral and other mechanisms. Nevertheless, efforts to that end have yielded no results whatsoever. At this juncture, Pakistan has another opportunity to engage in a comprehensive dialogue to resolve outstanding issues that have prevented it from adopting a clear and decisive stance in combating terrorism and a constructive approach for peace and security in Afghanistan and the wider region. In seeking a clear picture of the current situation, let us ask the following questions.

Where was Osama Bin Laden, the mastermind of the international terrorist organization Al-Qaida, killed? The answer: near the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad. Where did the notorious leader of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammed Omar, die? The answer: in a hospital in Karachi, Pakistan. Where was Mullah Akhtar Mansour, the successor of Mullah Omar, found and killed by international forces? The answer: in Balochistan, Pakistan. And guess which country's passport he was using to travel to different locations? Again, Pakistan. Where is the leadership of the Quetta Shura and the Peshawar Shura located at this very moment? The names of those locations speak for themselves. From what country has almost every single terrorist element and group and more than 20 internationally recognized terrorist groups entered into Afghanistan and continue to do so? Pakistan.

I have mentioned just a few examples of the persistent support from Pakistan enjoyed by extremist groups. Moreover, that is not just hearsay from Afghanistan; it has been acclaimed and verified by very credible international sources. Long before an international intervention and the so-called civil war

in Afghanistan, Pakistan adopted a policy of the use of violent proxies in its pursuit of political objectives.

Although there is no need to do so, we wish to categorically reject any claim of any support provided to terrorist groups in Afghanistan. The facts speak for themselves. Now it is time for Pakistan to opt for a constructive approach in combating terrorism and promoting peace in our region.

Lastly, was it not His Excellency Prime Minister Abbasi himself who, in an interview a few days ago, admitted that the culprits of the massive terrorist bombing on 31 May in Kabul may have entered Afghanistan from Pakistan?

Moving forward, we will use any means possible, including negotiation and dialogue, to ensure security and stability for our people. In that context, our resolve and commitment to defeat terrorism is unwavering, and that is evidenced in the sacrifice of our brave Afghan National Defence and Security Forces every day.

Mr. Usman (Pakistan): It is unfortunate that India has chosen to criticize the statement made by the Prime Minister of Pakistan that reflects the sentiments and aspirations of the oppressed and suffering people of Jammu and Kashmir as they face tyranny, repression and brutalities by the illegal and unjust occupation by India. The plight of the Kashmiri people at the hands of the Indian occupation forces is being documented by the international community and reputable human rights organizations.

The people of India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir look to the international community, especially to the members of the Security Council, to deliver on their pledge to hold a free, fair and impartial plebiscite, under the auspices of the United Nations, to enable them to decide their future. Let me re-emphasize and reject any misconceptions that India may have wished to create. India is responsible for undermining regional peace and stability.

I have the sad duty to inform those present that only yesterday, due to unprovoked firing and mortar shelling by Indian forces on the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, at least 10 innocent civilians, including many women, lost their lives on the Pakistan side. The shelling continues unabated — a sad reminder of Indian intransigence and stubbornness. That, too, shall fail.

The strategy of an offensive defence and double-squeeze flouted blatantly by National Security Adviser Doval, which India believes can make it a regional hegemony, can never succeed. Indian operators of mayhem and terror, such as commander Jadav, caught red-handed in Pakistan while spreading sabotage, terrorism and espionage, can never fulfil Indian dreams, which will remain just that, dreams.

For our Bangladeshi brothers and sisters, let me add that they have to emerge from the narrative of hate and dispel the twisted notions of history. There are no takers for their contentions. The issues of 1971 were agreed upon and settled under the tripartite agreement of 1974, which was signed by India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. We have to move on.

Instead of blaming others for its problems and failures, Afghanistan should focus on eradicating safe havens for terrorists in its undergoverned spaces and dealing with its white economy and narco-State problem. That is the major threat to regional peace and stability.

The meeting rose at 10.45 p.m.